VOICES
FROM THE LAKES

REV. C. D. BELL D.D.

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VOICES FROM THE LAKES,

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY THE

REV. CHARLES D. BELL, D.D.

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Second Edition.

LONDON:
JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET.
MDCCCLXXXI.

821
1206

Ballantyne Press
BALLANTYNE, HANSON AND CO.
EDINBURGH AND LONDON

Dedicatory Sonnet.

TO MY WIFE AND CHILDREN.

My Dear Ones! In your hands this Book I lay,
Looking for gentle judgment and no scorn,
Else had this little volume been forborne,
Nor had I sent it forth to face the day,
But folded in my heart had let it stay,
Where with no critic's words I should be torn,
Sharp as an arrow, rankling as a thorn,
As I passed onward on my humbled way—
But you will kindly weigh this offered Book,
And it shall call me softly back to mind,
When in its pages you shall sometimes look,
And think of many a pleasant day behind,
Whose current flowing like some hidden brook,
Thro' all your memories shall gently wind.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

—o—

This Edition differs from the First by the removal of the Hymns, which will appear with some new ones in a volume by themselves, and by the addition of five poems.

What was in the First Edition the Second Part of "Wilfred Ray," is now called "Ellen," and has no connection with the poem that precedes it.

The additions comprise "To a Child," on page 101; "Spring," on page 116; the two poems on pages 273 and 275; and "Lines for a Silver Wedding," on page 277.

The poems on "No more Sea" and "The Well of Bethlehem" have been altered and, I hope, improved.

It only remains for the Author to thank the Readers who have kindly received, and the Critics who have favourably noticed, his volume.

August 1881.

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VOICES FROM THE LAKES

AND OTHER POEMS.

A MEADOW AT RYDAL.

THE fields were bright as cloth of gold,
The buttercups so thickly grew;
The lanes were full as they could hold
Of orchis and the speedwell blue.

Hedgerows with starry flowers were gay,
And banks with purple foxgloves lined;
On meadows lay the new-mown hay,
Whose scent came on the summer wind.

White butterflies were on the wing,
Floating along the liquid air;
Bees into flowers themselves did fling,
And pass'd the honied hours there.

The cows stood knee-deep in the stream
That rippled thro' the open glade;
Or churned their mouths in happy dream,
Couched 'neath the elm-trees' leafy shade.

The hills were veiled in tender mist
Of azure and of golden air;
The vales shone like to amethyst,
The woods gleamed as an emerald fair.

The lark was singing in the sky,
And birds were warbling in the trees,
A happy voice came wandering by—
"Cuckoo, cuckoo," on the breeze.

We stood amidst the fragrant grass,
We looked on valley, sky, and hill;
We watched the shadows come and pass,
We drank of Nature to our fill.

We talked of man, we talked of God,
Of friends on earth, and friends in heaven;
Of some who lay beneath the sod,
Of some who still to us were given.

And then we fell to silence oft,
Broken at times by happy sigh;
Or by the woodland voice, so soft,
Of "Cuckoo, cuckoo," passing by.

A calm, that o'er all Nature stole,
And gently breathed of peace and rest,
Pass'd from the scene into the soul,
And throned itself within the breast.

Ah! happy, happy, happy day,
I look for others like to thee!
For tho' my head since then is grey,
Nature is more, not less, to me.

I hope to love it on till death;
Blue noons, fair nights, and gentle springs,
The cuckoo's voice, the cowslip's breath,—
All living, and all lifeless things.

A SUMMER EVENING IN BRATHAY CHURCHYARD.

THE rain that fell all morning ceased at eve,
And not a cloudlet dims the sun's last ray,
Whose brilliant beams a crown of glory weave
Around the forehead of the dying day;
And silver arrows from the moon's bright quiver
Fall in faint shafts of light upon the river.

The darkening hills lie grandly all around,
As flashes o'er their crests the evening star;
And Brathay's murmur is the only sound
That breaks the brooding silence near or far;
On earth, and air, and sky there lies a hush,
Not e'en a night-bird warbles in the bush.

The church-tower rises darkly to the sky,
Like some tall guardian of the dead beneath,

Who in their quiet resting-places lie,
Their sorrows over, in the arms of death,—
Tho' this fair spot beside the Brathay's wave
Wears not the gloom, or terror of the grave.

How beautiful the scene! It breathes of rest,
Unbroken quiet, and eternal ease;
The stars are mirrored in the stream's calm breast,
Unruffled by the shadow of a breeze;
And earth lies smiling in a happy dream,
Its lullaby, the music of the stream.

Pathos and stillness crown the place and hour,
As in the west the light begins to pale,
And dewy night draws over tree and flower
Her dark, but bright and star-inwoven veil;
And o'er this hallowed ground is shed abroad
The peace and deep tranquillity of God.

Upon the soul there comes a sense of calm,—
A quiet, born of happy solitude,—
A peace that steals upon the heart like balm,
As odours on the air from yonder wood;
And sorrow's self forgets her tears to weep,
And anguish for the time is lulled to sleep.

The world we bring not with us here; we leave
Behind its stormy passions and its strife,
All that compels the noble mind to grieve,
The trifles and the meannesses of life;
For in this scene where God is all in all,
The world appears immeasurably small.

Ah! when the fever of this life is past,
And the long labour of the day is done,
How sweet to rest in this fair spot at last,
Our grave illumined by the setting sun,
And guarded by the purple hills around,
The Brathay flowing near with silver sound.

TARN HAWSE.

A PURPLE glory of clouds
Fills a tender evening sky,
Flushed with the hues of a sun that sinks
Behind the blue hills to die.

A silvery crescent moon,
In a tremulous sea of light,
Shines in a beauty which graces the eve,
And gladdens the coming night.

One lustrous planet that burns
In the heart of the glowing west,
Large and lambent and all aflame,
Like a jewel on lady's breast.

A billowy sea of hills,
With an outline clear and bold,
Stretches as far as the eye can reach,
In many a wavy fold.

Hills all solemn and grand,
Yet soft in the tender gloom,
Are rich with colour from crown to base,
From the heather's crimson bloom.

A tarn at the mountain's foot,
With a fringe of fragrant grass,
Reflects the skies and the clouds and the hills
In waters as still as glass.

To the front the fair Bowfell
Rears up its crest on high;
And Wetherlam raises its curving length
Against the darkening sky.

Round the Langdale Pikes is wreathed
A diadem dark of cloud;
And Scawfell, robed in his mists, looms up
Like a giant in his shroud.

Glaramara lifts his head
Out of the valley afar,
And in the dim and quivering light,
Seems to kiss the evening star.

I know not in all the land,
Through the country far or near,
A scene of such perfect beauty as this,
With the hills and the little mere.

Oft have I watched the scene;
Silence on moor and fell,
Broken alone to the listening ear
By the sound of the far sheep-bell.

If this earth is so fair, O God,
Ah, what must it be above,
Where the landscape is bathed in the glowing light—
The light of Thy perfect love!

For the loveliest shapes of earth,
Are but shadows of things that are;
Wonders undreamt in Thy world on high,
Beyond this moon and star.

SKELWITH FORCE.

THE warmth of a summer noon,
A sky translucent and bright,
On which there is sleeping a fleecy cloud,
Suffused with an amber light.

Here is beauty of valley and hill,
And a river murmuring near,
That tumbles and rolls over mosses and stones,
All limpid and cool and clear.

A meadow of emerald grass,
Sloping from up the dell,
Is broidered all over with daisies white,
And gemmed with the blue harebell.

Stretching away to the west,
The Langdales rise on high,
Till the cloven crown of their soaring peaks
Is lost in the light of the sky.

Curvings of hills all round,
Are a frame for the picture fair;
And rock and scar are tenderly robed
In a vesture of golden air.

At the foot of the meadow green,
Is the rush of a foaming fall,
Whose waters dash downward from rock to rock,
Melodious and musical.

There is gentle whisper of trees,—
Alder, and poplar, and pine;
With the flush of roses in every hedge,
Where the briar and loosestrife twine.

Sweet flowers scent field and fell,
Plumed ferns are everywhere;
The Oak and Parsley, Osmunda and Beech,
And the dark-stemmed Maiden-hair.

'Tis a scene of pastoral peace,
Fair as a poet's dream:
With a glamour of beauty on all that you see,—
Leafy copse, and wood, and stream.

'Tis said that the morning stars
Sang aloud at Creation's birth;
That the sons of God shouted loud in their joy,
As He rounded this new-born earth.

And well may they sing on still,
Looking down on this radiant scene,
With its hills, and its rivers, and leafy woods,
And meadows of emerald green.

And the song may flow thro' the night,
When the purple shadows fall;
And mingle its notes with the roar and the rush
Of the foaming waterfall.

Dear God! to lie 'neath the blue,
And muse on Thy wondrous love,
Is a pleasure, the sweetest, the purest on earth,—
A joy as of Eden above.

For the very gates of Thy heaven
Seem to open before the gaze;
And the soul is lifted all out of itself,
In a rapture of bliss and praise.

In a rapture of praise and bliss,
Which stirs the pulses like wine,
To a passion that rises to keenest delight,
And borders upon the divine.

Ah! 'tis well to come hither and muse,
For the world intrudeth not here,
Where Nature herself is all in all,
And God and the angels near.

A MAY EVENING AT AMBLESIDE.

THE happy hills round Windermere
Look purple through the evening air;
The light falls soft on field and fell,
On rugged scar and wooded dell.

A leafy splendour crowns the scene,
The oak puts forth her tender green;
The branching pine stands dark and high,
Against the pale and solemn sky.

The fragrant thorn is flower'd with May,
Whose blossoms whiten every spray;
And beech and birch tree, bending, make
A mirror of the placid lake.

The noise of streams is in the ear,
And rapid Rotha murmurs near;
While birds from woods and copses dim
Chant loud and clear their evening hymn.

How mellow is the throstle's note!
What music swells the robin's throat!
And hark! from far the cuckoo's cry,
Borne on the breeze, comes wandering by.

See how the tender opal light
Burns like a crown on Loughrigg's height;
While Fairfield's crest in shadow lies,
Veiled in empurpled mysteries!

O peaceful hour! O happy time!
O Spring, in all thy glorious prime!
I feel the spirit of the scene
Thrill me with pleasure pure and keen.

O God so great! O God so good!
To spread such wealth of lake and wood,
To pile the mountains, arch the sky,
Low at Thy feet in praise I lie!

Father of mercies, I would see
Thy love in all, and all in Thee;
Proofs of Thy goodness and Thy grace,
Through sight and sound in every place.

And oft, when gazing on this land,
Decked by Thy kind and liberal hand,
I ask, in wonderment of bliss,
"Was Eden's self so fair as this?"

A SUMMER DAY AT AMBLESIDE.

THERE lies a hush on all the summer woods,
Unbroken save by pipe of joyous bird;
Still is the air, and motionless the clouds—
By not a breeze the rippling wheat is stirr'd.
All nature swoons. No bleating of the flocks
Comes from the meadow grass, or echoes from the rocks.

There was a sound of welcome rain last night,
Blowing from up the dale, and o'er the hills;
But now the storm has passed, and all is bright;
The becks are fuller, and a thousand rills
Rush foaming down the hollows in white streams,
Flashing from crag to crag with rainbow-coloured gleams.

Like diamonds shine the rain-drops in the sun,
Gemming each shimmering leaf, each spike of grass,
And sweet shy flowers that 'neath the hedgerows run,
To hide their loveliness from all who pass;

While honeysuckle and the golden broom
Fling on the long June day odorous rich perfume.

The tender shadows quickly come and go,
Climbing the hills, and creeping up the dell ;
And all the valley is with light aglow,
And crowned with glory every rugged fell ;
Sunshine is on the landscape far and wide,
Sparkles in every mere, and down the countryside.

I know this land by heart, aye, every nook—
Each copse, each tarn, and every leafy dell :
Each brawling streamlet, and each tinkling brook—
I know it all by heart, and love it well.
Oft have I watched the daylight dawn, and pale,
And evening wrapped the valley in her dusky veil.

Not far from hence you see the tall church spire,
Where sunbeams rest upon the house of prayer ;
The blazoned windows burn as if on fire ;
And, palpitating on the crystal air,
I fancy that I hear the chiming bell,
And distant dreamy music from the organ swell.

Wordsworth's dear mount is yonder, old and grey,
And guarded well by Fairfield's purple crest;
Walled in with laurel, and with fragrant bay,
A very Paradise of peace and rest,
With beauty all around, both far and near,
And, full in front, the queen of lakes, fair Windermere.

There in the valley—I can see it now—
Haunted by memories of the great and good,
Lies Arnold's favourite home, his sweet Fox How,
Hid in a bower of shrubs and waving wood;
Far from the restless, troubled world withdrawn,
A poet's dream of river, garden, copse, and lawn.

Without what beauty, and within what grace
Of cultured minds, — true "sweetness" and true "light!"
Him death had throned long since in his just place—
Man of the ample brain, keen, polished, bright;
But she lived still, the loving tender wife,
Helpmeet and friend through all his grand heroic life.

Who can forget, that ever knew her well,
The rapid sympathies, the genial smile,

The wise, true words from gracious lips that fell,
Charming the listener, as she talked the while,
Now grave—now gay—now earnest with deep thought,
As truths of highest reach before her mind were brought!

All this is now a memory,—a sigh,—
Like other memories both sweet and sad;
How the years rob us as they hurry by,
Taking away so much that made us glad!
Yet leaving to us still so much that's bright,
Our path is not all dark,—at worst a chequered light.

Poorer that home, poorer the valley now;
For on a tomb is carved a pure white cross,
That tells to all who through the churchyard go,
Her everlasting gain and our sore loss.
Traced on the stone this record fronts the sight,—
"Her meetness for the saints' inheritance in light."

What thrills me? Pain or bliss? O pain, to think
Of happy hours for ever past and flown!
O bliss, again to stand upon the brink
Of this dear fell, and muse of what is gone!
O pain, to ponder on the days now o'er!
O bliss, to feel this pleasure all my own once more!

Sweet pain, keen bliss,—I know not which is best,
The pain that fills my saddened eyes with tears,
The bliss that throbs through all my happy breast,
As here again I feel the joy of years!
I know not which I'd choose, or that, or this,—
The pain so bitter sweet, the sweet yet bitter bliss.

AN AUTUMN DAY AT AMBLESIDE.

AUTUMN with magic hand hath touched the leaves,
And turn'd their glossy green to burning gold;
The twittering swallows chatter on the eaves
Of flight to summer lands from regions cold;
Soft cloudlets rest upon the clear blue sky,
And breezes from the lake come wafted by.

A valley 'tis which woods and streams adorn,
Few plains the golden tillage richly yield,
Few sickles flash, few reapers bind the corn,
Few harvest songs are heard from fold or field;
Stretches there are of emerald pasture-ground,
Girdled by mountain beauty all around.

But now the gorgeous woods are all ablaze,
Glowing with colours of more brilliant dyes
Than gleam from monarch's robes on gala days,
Or strike with sudden light men's dazzled eyes,
As coming forth in royal pomp and state,
He enters halls where thronging courtiers wait.

A golden lustre fills the wooing air;
Each rock and scar bathed in an amber mist,
Transfigured seem to shapes divinely fair,
Suffused with orange, rose, and amethyst,
Which o'er their hoary brows a radiance fling,
Bright as the iris on an angel's wing.

The mountains glow with ever-changing sheen,
That varies with the shifting gleams of light;
Here golden ferns, that rise 'midst mosses green,
Shake out their curling plumes on every height;
There fragrant heath, each bell a pendent gem,
Crowns the deep grass with purple diadem.

The balmy day is musical with sounds;
The plaintive robin's song, the caw of rooks,
The low of herds in far-off pasture-grounds,
Whispers of leaves and noise of babbling brooks,
With rush of streams that flow in milk-white rills,
Down the blue hollows of the distant hills.

Autumn is in her young and lusty noon;
Nor fallen leaves, nor withered flowers, betray
That this proud pomp of splendour all too soon
Shall change, and fade, and pass into decay;

That Winter with his cold and chilling breath,
Shall freeze this beauty all to icy death.

Ye Autumn days, that crown the waning year,
  And flush the glowing hills with tender light;
Ye Suns, whose rising crimson every mere,
  Whose setting fringe with gold the skirts of night;
How often have I stood,—as I do now,—
And watched your glories from this sloping brow.

O days all fair, half sad, which to the mind
  Bring memories of times for ever flown;
Of pleasures in the years so far behind,
  And voices silent, and dear friends now gone;
I live a two-fold life within your light—
The past and present are at once in sight.

Ah me! how much I love this country fair!
  The valley and the hills, both far and wide;
The quiet village builded here and there,
  Part on the plain, part on the mountainside,
The houses stretching up to Stock Ghyll's Fall,
They were my pastoral charge, both one and all.

Dear Autumn days! What fruitless yearnings rise
That all the loved ones were with us again;
What tears unbidden spring up to the eyes,
To know such longings idle are and vain;—
That they who gladdened all the days of yore,
Shall look with us upon these scenes no more.

O happy Autumn! O bright halcyon days!
When earth lies basking in the golden light;
O mellow moons, that shine with softest rays,
Flooding with splendour all the solemn night;
Linger awhile; fain would we keep you here;
We would not lose—not yet—what is so dear.

It may not be. The happy year must wane,
And go the way of all things bright and fair,
Of hopes that die not to revive again—
Of pleasures numbered 'mongst the things that were.
Here all is change—upward we turn our sight;
Suns set not there, nor Moons withdraw their light.

WINTER AT AMBLESIDE.

WINTER in this fair land has many moods;
At times the storms come roaring down the vale,
Across the mountains, through the sounding woods,
Or sweeping up the Ghylls with shudd'ring wail,
Shaking the red-stemmed pines that crown the height,
And stand in graceful forms against the light.

Sometimes from stormy skies the rain-cloud breaks,
Swelling the torrents in their rocky bed,
Till streams grow rivers, rivers grow to lakes,
And boats might ply where once the reapers sped,
And the whole air is murm'rous with the sound
Of rushing waters foaming all around.

This noon there is a keenness in the air
Which stirs the blood and makes the pulse beat high,
And the whole scene is most divinely fair,
Lying beneath a pale and steel-blue sky,

Which sheds a softened lustre o'er the plain,
And on the streams, bound each in glittering chain.

White is the valley once so brightly green,
White all the mountain-tops that, crown'd with snow,
Glitter with light intensely bright and keen,
When with the dawn the sky is all aglow,
The colour changing as the morning grows,
From grey to purple, purple into rose.

The trees are stripped, yet are no longer bare,
Feathered with snow they stand up in the light,
All motionless, and not a passing air
Stirs their pure bridal robe of spotless white,
While from each bough clear icicles hang down,
Like flashing diamonds in a monarch's crown.

Through the still air distinctly comes each sound—
Voices of skaters from the frozen lake,
The neigh of horse, and bay of deep-mouth'd hound,
The warble of the red-breast in the brake,
The fall from bending branches of the snow,
The slender noise of streams in fetter'd flow.

Fair are these days, so calm, so still, so bright,
Fair is each glassy lake, each hoary fell,
Fair are the falls that quiver in the light,
Fair is each ice-bound tarn, each rocky dell,
Fairer than all the night, with moon and star,
Shining like crystals in the heavens afar.

And yet, though fair, the beauty 'tis of death,
The earth is covered with a snowy shroud,
Her requiem chanted by the wind's rude breath,
In tones now low and soft, now deep and loud,
And Nature lies all wan upon her bier,
And clouds shed down the sympathising tear.

Hopeless looks all as when the words are said,
"Ashes to ashes" over those held dear,
And to the earth we give our holy dead,
With throbbings of the heart and many a tear,
And the grave closing o'er the lifeless clay,
We turn to front the world as best we may.

No snowdrop lifts its bell above the ground,
No song of bird is heard amongst the trees,
No hint of summer in the sky is found,
No scent of spring gives fragrance to the breeze,

No sign of leaf on valley, copse, or hill;
And the whole earth is barren, cold, and still.

Yet there is hope, though all seems blank and dead;
There is a stirring at the roots of things,
A throbbing quick of life in Earth's deep bed,
A promise as of fair and joyous springs;
And buds there are where blossoms folded lie,
Ready to flower beneath the summer sky.

Such hope, as when we seek the grave a-weeping,
And carry there the bare, yet precious seed,
With hearts that well-nigh break for dear ones sleeping,
Yet trusting Him who is "the Life indeed;"
And able by His grace through tears to sing,
"Where is thy vict'ry, grave; where, death, thy sting?"

For soon the day shall dawn, and shadows fly,
Winter shall pass and Spring again shall bloom,
Eternal Summer brighten all the sky,
And smile upon a world without a tomb;
Earth's resurrection shall with blessings come,
And songs shall usher in GOD'S harvest-home.

Then He that comes to wake His saints shall say,
As round to each dear sleeper's bed He goes
To rouse them with a touch at break of day,
And all His heart with tender love o'erflows,
"The morning breaks, the shadows flee away,
Arise, my love, my dove, and come away!

"Winter is past, the rain is gone and o'er,
The song of birds fills all the happy land,
Flowers appear upon the earth once more,
The turtle-dove is heard on every hand.
It is thy Bridegroom's voice to thee doth say,
'Arise, my love, my dove, and come away!'"

WILFRED RAY.

IN a fair valley of fair Westmoreland,
Of English counties fairest, near the Lake
Which by consent is crowned the queen of all,
Sweet Windermere, a market village lies,
Built part upon the fell, part in the vale.
One long street stretches close beneath a hill,
From end to end in length about a mile;
Another clambers up a church-crowned brow,
With houses clustering round a place of graves.
Nor stops the village here; it runs still on,
Nor ceases till you reach a sunny height,
From which a glorious landscape fronts the eye,—
Here are blue hills, green dales, and silver streams,
And fern-clad fells, and mountains throned in cloud—
The Langdales rising over all to heaven,
And Windermere, a stretch of spacious lake,
Set in a frame of meadow and of wood,

And roar of Stock-Ghyll Force heard far below.
Bright pasture-lands abound, watered by streams
Pure as the river that flowed gently through
The garden planted by the Lord in Eden,
And which, four-branched, ran over sands of gold.
It is a storied country—haunted ground—
Not from its wondrous loveliness alone,
But from the memories of the good and great
Who long had made it their adopted home,—
Poets and scholars, men of note and fame,
Who made their mark upon the world beyond,
And left it better than they found it;—men
Drawn hither by the beauty breathing round,—
Mountains which catch the first gleam of the sun,
And lakes that mirror in their placid breasts
Meadow, and wood, and fell, and rugged scar;
And when the night draws darkness o'er the land,
And sows the purple skies with silver stars,
Glasses their brightness in the tranquil wave.

Here, in this vale, some sixty years ago,
Before the new church with its fair churchyard
Fronted the east, or its strong massive spire
Caught on its top the flaming morning rays

As the red sun shone over Wansfell's head,
And filled with light the valley far below,
Lived Wilfred Ray, a statesman, well-to-do.
This Wilfred had a story of his own;
And there are those alive who tell it still—
A strange adventure of their native hills.
The winter had set in with fitful storms,—
Rain, hail, and snow, and frost that bound the streams
And spread its icy coating o'er the tarns
And smaller lakes at first; and then so sharp
And bitter grew the cold, and stayed so long,
That Windermere itself at length did yield
Subjection to its thrall, and lay one sheet
Of ice from end to end, from Waterhead
To Newby Bridge, where the small rivulet
Flows with a silver sound from out the lake.
At this time Wilfred was some four months old,
The first-born of his parents, and their joy,
A crown of bliss to Ruth and Michael Ray.
Their married life ran on in full content,
Close to the little mill whose dripping wheels
Are washed and turned by the tumultuous Stock.
Michael a native was of Ambleside,
A village yet, and not a busy town,

With gas, and Institute, and great hotels,
And other changes which come in the wake
Of what are called improvements, march of mind,
Though many think, with sorrow and regret,
Of simple manners, hurt, or spoiled, or lost,
By intercourse with the great world beyond.
Tourists, who "fly like doves unto their windows,"
Excursion trains, and steam-boats on the lake,
Have won the land from quiet and repose;
And for the sunny summer months have sent
Their crowds like swarms of locusts through the land.
And yet, how well that toilers from our towns,
Leaving the smoke, the dizzy noise of wheels,
The whirling roar of engines, and the air
Dark, close, and stifling, should come forth, and see
God's face in fair blue skies, in fields and flowers,
And hear His voice in soft and whispering winds,
In rushing torrents, and in foaming falls.
Well, they should breathe at times a purer air,
And see the cloudless heavens bright and clear,
Where prayers may pierce direct, not through a pall
Of yellow smoke, which hides the sun from view.
Ah! well that tender childhood, pale and wan,
Should leave the busy loom, and roaring wheels,

Should sometimes see the lambs upon the sward,
And chase the butterfly on flowery meads;
Or mark the bee collecting honied store,
And hear the melody of singing birds.
Haply, they carry back to stifling homes
Some gentler thoughts of Nature, Man, and God.

Close to the wooded shores of Ullswater,
A lonely lake, shut in by purple hills,
And glassing great Helvellyn in its wave,
Ruth Ray was born, and came to womanhood.
Here did she grow in beauty year by year,
As innocent and active as a fawn;
To her young feet each grassy slope and dell,
Each tangled copse, each mountain clothed with ferns,
Or bare and naked as the slate itself,
Were things familiar as the sanded floor
Of her own cottage. Well she knew the lake,
Each bay, each landing-place, each shady nook,
To which her boat might smoothly glide, or where
It might be moored with safety to the shore.
At sunny morn, or tranquil eve, she dipped
Right oft her oars in waters all so clear,
That you could see some fathoms down, and watch

The tiny fish, with bright and glistering backs,
Glance swiftly here and there, and in their sport
Rush through the feathery grass, or tangled weed.
She was the idol of her parents' home,
Their only girl. Two stalwart sons they had—
Tall, strong, and with the independent gait
And manly beauty of this northern land.
They helped their father in his farming well,
And mowed the hay, and reaped the scanty crops,
Scarce ripe for sickle ere the winter's breath
Came blowing chilly down the mountain's side.
They drove the sheep up to the hills in spring,
To feed through all the happy summer time
On sweet and spacious tracts of fragrant fell.
Michael had—in his visits to the dale,
To purchase sheep, and stock his little farm—
Seen Fair Ruth Fletcher, gentle, modest, true,
Sweet as the summer, fair as budding spring.
Ah! well remembered he the day when first
They met, she shy as lily of the vale,
That loves the covert of its sword-shaped leaves,
And shrinking, hides its beauty from the sun.
She sat within her boat, close to the shore,
Beneath the shady boughs of birch and pine,

And thinking no one near, beguiled the time
With simple song, which charmed the listening ear;
So clear the voice, so silver sweet the tone,—

'Tis well to be a maiden free,
To roam o'er dale and hill,
To feel the sweets of liberty,
And wander where I will.
A-well-a-day, heigho!
Softly the breezes blow,
But shadows fall, the light begins to go.

The whole day long I sing my song,
Because I am my own—
Because to none I do belong,
But to myself alone.
A-well-a-day, heigho!
Shall it be ever so?
Shall days to come be like the long ago?

Some that I meet say love is sweet,
Some say 'tis full of care,
And others that 'tis passing fleet,
Gone like a breath of air.

A-well-a-day, heigho!
From joy oft springs our woe,
And quickly pass all brightest things below.

Content I feel, I wish no change,
I wander at my will;
Thro' field, o'er fell, I freely range,
By lake, and wood, and hill.
A-well-a-day, heigho!
My heart's my own, I know,
And mine shall be, whoe'er may come or go.

I need not say that vow she did not keep,
Or tell how Michael wooed, and won her heart.
Nor lightly was she won, this mountain maid.
They had of happy courtship many days.
Ask the green woods, the verdurous hills, the streams,
Where oft in tender dawns, and dewy eves,
They wandered hand in hand together;—ask
The lake, where oft in balmy noons they dipped
Their oars, and idly floated down the flood.
The end of all these pleasant meetings this,
Ruth loved as deeply as she was beloved;

And left her home and parents for his sake,
Though not without some trembling and regrets.
Some natural tears shed on her wedding-day,
When she had turned to leave the church with him,
Whose partner, friend, companion she must be,
Through all the happy years of wedded life.
He bore her proudly home—her home and his—
And found she was a light within the house—
An ever-present brightness and a joy,
Whose voice made ceaseless music in his heart,
Whose love refreshed him after hours of toil.
So fled the months in happiness away,
Like some great river, whose continuous stream
Knows neither let nor hindrance in its flow;
And one fair autumn day a child was born,
And Ruth became the mother of a boy,
Which brought another joy to Michael's home,
And brimmed his cup, until it overflowed,
And sang his heart, as sing the birds in May.

One winter day—the boy was four months old—
Ruth rose betimes, prepared for early walk,
To Ullswater across the fells; for news
Had come her father was not well, and yearned

To have her near him some two days or more.
And she would take her babe—for she was proud
Of her fair child—the boy would cheer
The old man's heart, and do him worlds of good.
So she made ready for her wintry walk,
By Kirkstone Pass, and thence to Patterdale.
Michael and she had never parted since
Their marriage day. And could he have his wish,
They had not parted now; but he was bound
To meet at Grasmere on that very day
The land-steward from the Hall, and there with him
To settle rent and terms for lease of farm
He fain would add to that which now he held.
But still he would go with her on the road
A mile or so, and carried his sweet boy,
Who crowed, and laughed, and was brimful of glee,
As though the bright and bracing air had sent
Fresh strength through all his round and rosy limbs.
He left her where the lonely Kirkstone Pass
Comes into view—a Pass which, black and rough,
And wild and rocky, leads by Hartsop Fell,
Down to the winding Deepdale, near which gleams
Fair Brothers Water. There they kissed and parted,
And hope and love sang sweetly in their hearts,

For on the third day they should meet again.
She gained her father's house a little tired,
And found the old man better, glad, and moved
To see her and the infant, who, not strange,
Looked out at him, with wondering blue eyes,
And cooed, and made great dimples in his cheek.
The visit was a happy one for all,—
The aged couple, Ruth, and her young boy.
Her brothers had been called away from home
The day before that fixed for her return,
Summoned on urgent business to Carlisle.
She said "Good-bye," with many an ardent hope,
That as the spring returned with genial breath,
And vernal breezes blowing soft and mild,
They all might meet again; and "father, he
Should come," she said, "and bring her mother too,
And visit her and Michael, as before
They once had done; and sure she was the change
Would do them good, and gladden all their hearts."

The morn was drear and cold, and darkened o'er
With scudding clouds, that fled before a wind
Biting and bitter, threatening fall of snow.
They fain had kept her, but she would not stay;

"Michael expected her, they were to meet
Upon the Kirkstone Pass, so he had said.
She would not disappoint him, had no fears,
Was strong and well, the snow might never come,
Or, if it did, would not be much—a storm,
And over." So against their wish she took
Her way, and wrapped the babe in many a shawl,
And pressed him to her breast to keep him warm.
And then she journeyed bravely on her road,
Along the rugged pathway, torn by rains,
And broken by the torrents from the hills.
She crossed the little bridge, beneath whose arch
The Goldrill runs, of yellow, tawny hue,
And by the hills that, 'neath a leaden sky,
Looked black and frowning, and then up the dell,
Close by High Hartsop, nestling 'neath Dove Crags.
So for some weary miles upon her way.
The ruthless wind swept fiercely down the vale,
Whirling white flakes of snow, which now fell fast,
And blotted out the heavens, and the hills
To right and left, and blocked up all the paths.
Poor Ruth! Soon wearied with the ceaseless fight
Against the tempest, breathless, blinded too,
By showers of driving sleet, she could but stop,

And turn her from the wind, then sink all faint
Upon a crag that jutted on the road.
Her babe began to cry; she pressed it close,
And held it firmly to her throbbing heart,
Then breathed a piteous, earnest prayer to God.
She knew there was no help; no house was near,
Not even shepherd's hut, and solitude
And desolation reigned around. Still roared
The savage wind; still fell the pitiless snow;
Still darker grew the day, and drifting mists
Came down, and settled on the mountain-tops,
And threw a ghostly shroud o'er all the land.
Ruth struggled to her feet again; again
Fronted the tempest's fury, and held on
With slow and aching feet, and fainting heart.
The boy was heavy in her arms, a weight
She felt she had not strength to carry far.
Had she to battle with the storm alone,
She would have kept up heart, and bravely fought
Against the blustering wind, and driving snow.
But with her babe she knew the fight was vain.
A feeling came upon her of despair;
She thought of home, her happy, happy home—
Her husband, and his love, and all the loss

To both; her infant too; the certain death
Before the boy and her, unless some help
Were quickly sent her by a pitying God;
And a sharp cry, that tore her heart in twain,
Burst from her lips, of "Michael! Michael! Michael!"
This passed, and then she turned her thoughts to God,
And tried to bend to His her will, and say,
"Not mine, O Father! oh, not mine, but Thine!"
And then she cried, "My boy, oh, save my boy!
For me, if I must die, so be it, Lord,
I'll lay me down upon this bed of snow,
And fall asleep, content to wake in heaven;
But spare my babe, good Lord, for Michael's sake,
Nor shatter at one fatal blow his peace,
But leave some light in my dear husband's home.
'Tis all I ask, O Father, all I ask;
I die in peace, if Thou wilt spare my boy."
And then she stripped herself of cloak and shawl,
Of all in dress she had of soft and warm,
And laid part in a crevice, 'tween two crags,
A woollen bed on which the babe might lie,
And part wrapped round her darling, who then smiled
Up in her face. Then with a long, long kiss,
The last that she should ever press upon

Those rosy lips, she laid him, with a prayer,
As Moses was committed to the ark,
Between the spaces of the sheltering crags,
Where neither snow could reach, nor tempest come;
This done, she couched beside him on the snow—
The white and wintry bed of freezing snow,
Her only thought to screen him from the wind;
Her body flung between her child and death.
And there she lay till numbing sleep came on,
And wrapped her in its fatal lethargy.
Then blacker grew the eve, the shadows fell;
The drifts came down on mountain and on moor,
And drew a dreary pall o'er all the vale.

Michael this morn had set out somewhat late,
Detained an hour or more, against his will,
By visit from the bailiff at the Hall,
Who early came to talk about the lease,
And have it settled without more delay.
When he was free again—the business done—
He hurried off at once to meet his wife,
Hoping to reach the little inn, that crowns
The Kirkstone Pass, somewhere about the noon;
And after resting there awhile with Ruth,

To leave for home again, before the short
And wintry-looking day, which threatened storm,
Closed in, and darkness fell upon the vale.
Glad was he at the thought of seeing those
He loved so fondly; for the three days seemed
An endless separation to his thought,
So much he missed them. Lightly then he trod
The road all hard beneath; and though the snow
Began to fall, and though the biting wind
Blew in wild gusts, and howled across the fells,
He heeded not the weather, but passed on,
And only thought of meeting at the end.
So for a while. But thicker grew the air,
And faster fell the snow, and louder blew
The wind across the landscape, dark and dull,
And shrieked adown each ghyll and mountain gorge,
As if a demon rode upon the blast.
At last his eyes were blinded by the flakes
That, cold and white, were blown into his face;
And as the road was choked up by the drift—
Stone wall and hedge being level with the path—
He lost himself, and wandered on the Screes,
And knew not where he was, or where the way,
And so stood still, perplexed what next to do;

And as he stood there, doubting, on the fell,
He fancied that he heard a plaintive voice—
A voice like Ruth's, low, pleading in its tone,
And somewhat smothered, calling three times o'er,—
"Michael! Michael! Michael!" He started wild,
Shuddered, and clasped his hands in agony,
And shrieked out, "Ruth! Dear Ruth!" Then,
"Ruth!"—again,
"Where art thou, Ruth?" Then waited for reply
That never came upon his straining ear:
There was no answer but the whistling wind
That blew in drifts the falling clouds of snow.
Then, with a cry hot from his heart to God,
Moved blindly on, and might have wandered there
Till lost in some deep pit or treacherous chasm,
Had not a shepherd's dog, sent out in search
Of some poor straggling sheep, crouched at his feet
And barked, as glad to see a human face.
The dog he followed—followed numb and cold,
With aching feet, slow steps, and sinking heart,
Unto the lonely inn, where travellers rest
Who cross the Pass, and which doth proudly claim
To be the "Highest house inhabited"
Within the pleasant borders of our isle.

'Twas evening now, and all was dark and drear;
The landscape wrapped in winding-sheet of snow,
Which covered o'er the dead and buried earth.
And Ruth, where was she? Ruth, his wife, his life?
Where the dear babe that filled his home with joy?
Not there. They had not seen, or heard of her.
Perchance she had not left her father's house,
But stayed at Patterdale until the storm
Should pass. Surely they'd keep her at their hearth
On such a fearful day, nor let her leave
Until the wild and driving tempest passed;
So Michael hoped—so Michael fondly prayed.
But still he had a sadness at the heart,
And felt a dreadful fear that blanched his cheek,
And smote with piercing pain his burning brow.
Still must he wait, in anguish, till the morn,
And pass the long, long night as best he may.
The storm now somewhat lulled, and the wind fell,
And the snow ceased, the sky began to clear,
While, 'midst the rack of scudding clouds,
A friendly star shone faintly in the blue.
No bed did Michael press that awful night,
But by the lonely fire, in thought and prayer,
He watched the breaking of the wintry dawn.

Soon as the first faint glimmer streaked the sky,
He and his host—a man of kindly heart,
Who made poor Michael's grief his own—the dog,
Which led him to the inn the night before,—
Started for Ullswater, along a road
Some six feet deep in snow. The morn was calm
As though no blustering wind had ever blown
Across the hills, or blast had scourged the clouds.
Poor Michael ne'er forgot that early walk,—
That wintry scene, his steps that sank full oft
In the white drift, the progress slow, the fear,
The trembling doubt, the agonising prayer,
The anguish gnawing at his quivering heart!
The shepherd-dog ran swiftly on before,
His pace the quickest o'er the yielding snow.
Just as they reached the bottom of the Pass,
Not far from Hartsop, where the little road
Begins to wind and curve to Goldrill Bridge,
He came to sudden pause, and sniffed the ground,
Then raised his head again, and uttered loud
A long and piteous whine, that ringing clear
Through the bright frosty air, smote on the ear
Of Michael, striking to his faltering heart,
Until he staggered 'neath the awful dread

That wrung and tortured him, and brought the sweat
In drops of anguish to his dizzy brow.
He never knew with what a frantic bound,
With what a piercing cry of agony,
He reached the spot where howled the shepherd-dog;
And stooping down, to what at first sight seemed
A frozen mound of snow, he found his Ruth—
His wife—life of his life—heart of his heart—
Ruth stiff and cold upon her bed of snow;
Snow was her winding-sheet, snow wrapped her round,
Snow veiled her face, now whiter than itself.
Dead! Yes, poor Ruth was dead! The mother's love
Shone forth in sacrifice; love strong as death,
Yea, stronger far, and trampling upon death,
And rising more than conqueror o'er his fear.
The baby lived, and smiled a faint, sad smile,
As they unwound it from its pile of shawls;
Then cried in wailing tones and low—poor babe!
Lacking the nourishment it used to have
From the dear mother's breast; but safe and well,
And, far as they could see, unhurt, unharmed,
Spite the dread night it spent amid the snow.
It was the rescued life of his dear child
That saved poor Michael from a blank despair,—

Thanks to that God who planted in his home
So sweet a flower, to soothe his bitter grief,
And keep his heart from breaking. Long it was
Before he lifted up the head, whose hairs
Had turned to grey, changed by the agony
Of that one night,—his loss,—the crushing grief—
That pressed upon a sad and desolate soul.
Long, long it was before he could resume
The even tenor of his former life.
For flock, and farm, and field, in which he used
To take so much delight, a burden grew;
And though a man of faith and prayer, he found
It hard to say, "Thy will, not mine, be done."
And had it not been for the grace that fights
And conquers Nature, he had gained no power
To bow his head, and say the words at all.
Long was he restless—ranged the hills, the dales,
And sought for peace of mind 'midst Nature's scenes,
Where he met God alone, and prayed for strength
To suffer, and be patient, nor repine.
In the church too, so simple, plain, and rude,
He listened for all words of rest and hope,
And learned that God is good, that all His ways,
Though sometimes dark, hard oft to understand,

Are full of wisdom, mercy, truth, and love.
Thus, though his heart was breaking 'neath the blow,
And though his flesh was smarting from the rod,
He bowed his head to kiss the hand that smote,
And so confessed, "He doeth all things well."
Her grave, that lay outside the little church,
Was ever kept fresh dressed with fragrant flowers;
And here he oft was found, at early morn,
And in the shadows of the quiet eve.
So years passed on, and Wilfred, his dear boy—
Ruth's image, with her eyes, and sunny hair—
Grew from a child to lad, from lad to man,
And was his father's comfort and his joy;
And Michael felt, so long as he was spared,
His mother's spirit was not lost to earth.

ELLEN.

AS speed the moons through all their circling rounds,
Each has its beauty 'mongst our lakes and hills;
Spring leads the seasons here with buoyant step,
And at her side there trips the new-born Year;
And Summer follows, sweet as morning's breath,
And clad in robe of many-coloured flowers.
Then mellow Autumn comes, and round her brow
Is bound a crown of golden ears of corn;
Winter the last, his head all white with snow,
And from his beard bright icicles hang down.

Giles Fleming loving in his youth's first dawn,
Not winning her he loved, lived single long,
Nor married till his head was silvered o'er
With grey. He tilled a farm that was his own,
And which from son to son had passed for years.

One only child he had, a boy, dearer
For that he was the fruit of his old age,
An Isaac born out of due time to him.
He made the gladness of his father's home,
Its brightness and its joy. Never was youth
More worthy of a parent's fondest love.
Large-browed was Philip, large-brained, large of heart;
From out an honest eye of darkest grey,
Looked forth no common mind,—one lofty, pure,
And which, like sensitive and well-tuned harp,
Responded quick to every skilful hand
That struck the chords to noble themes, and true.
He had a painter's eye, a poet's heart,
A soul that open lay to Nature's spells,
And took her lessons in with love and joy.
All that the Grammar School could give he had
Of scholarship, and at this fount he drank,
And yearned for deeper draughts of the same spring.
All books he read, or grave, or gay, romance
Or poem, legendary tale, that fell
Into his hands. These he would borrow oft
From kindly neighbour, or a willing friend;
Nay, the great Poet of the Lakes himself
Had lent him many a volume from his shelves,

And stayed the hunger at the young boy's heart
For knowledge, so that Philip did not starve.
The Pastor of the parish ruled the school,
And taught the village boys through all the week.
When Sunday came, he fed, or tried to feed,
The flock that gathered in the church's fold.
A kindly man he was, and scholar good;
Eccentric, and with scanty light enough,
He saw, as one with eyes half purged from film,
Men as trees walking. But—nor this mean praise—
He used the light he had up to its measure.
Far better so than have the sun shine clear,
And walk in darkness. No divided flock
Was his. All met together in one house
Of common prayer, from which a single bell,
But sweet, rang softly out across the vale,
And called his charge on Sabbath morns and eves,
To hear their pastor's voice in prayer and psalm,
And in the word of exhortation drawn
From the great Book of God. So here, afar
From towns and cities, passed he useful days.

By men of zeal the Gospel sound has spread
Through all our land,—in vales and dales remote,

On heath-clad moors and lonely glens, in wild
And wind-swept hills, and distant nooks, and where
The storm-tossed sea washes the sandy coasts,
Where weather-beaten men draw from the green
And treacherous wave a scant and perilous living.
Thus have the blessed tidings filled our land,
Which hallow life, and raise the thoughts to God.
And if our England boldly lifts her front
Amongst the nations, just because she owns
A peasantry more loyal, virtuous,
More prosperous, and happy, and content,
Than that of other countries, may we not
Affirm from this it springs, that through her isle,
From sea to sea, in all her parishes,
A pious ancestry took care to place
A minister of Christ, to preach the truth,
And who, by word and eloquence of life,
Should point the way to heav'n, and lead to God?

Young Philip grew in wisdom and in strength,
A lover both of nature and of books;
Nor was he scholar only. On the farm
He helped his father—ploughed, and sowed, and reaped,
And drew a pleasure from the sights and sounds

A bounteous nature spread around his home.
He loved the vernal morn, the balmy day,
The shimmer of the leaves, the gliding stream,
The mossy glen, the banks all plumed with fern,
And the smooth lake that lay in calm repose,
Embosomed in the hills that rose around.
He felt the beauty of the fair green earth
In all its changes under sun and cloud;
Or when the moonlight blanched it, and the stars
Looked down in silence on a world asleep;
Or when the storm came roaring down the vale,
Bending the branching pines before its blast,
And churning into white and seething foam
The waters of the lake, lifting on high
Its curling waves, until Winandermere
Grew like an inland sea—dark, dangerous, wild.
When clashed the elements in dreadful war,
And the loud thunder roared among the hills,
And livid lightning leaped from lurid clouds,
Then gave he up his spirit to the scene—
Surrendering himself to time and hour;
Now thrilled with awe, elated now with joy,—
Now filled with triumph, every sense sublimed,
And drawing from the struggle of the storm

A feeling deep of rapture and repose.
Oft stood he with uncovered head amid
The tempest's rage, and as the lightning streamed
Along the troubled sky, and thunders crash'd
As tho' had come the awful Day of doom,
He lowly bowed a reverent head and said,—
"My Father's voice! my Father's voice! How grand!"

Up to this time, when three-and-twenty springs
Had passed full lightly over Philip's head,
His life had glided on a quiet stream,—
Unruffled days, and nights of peaceful rest.
Nothing had chanced to stir the deeper depths
Of a strong nature, on the surface calm;
But capable of passionate emotion,
Intense and keen, and all aglow with fire.
He had escaped as yet love's pleasant pains,—
Its hopes, its fears, its triumph, or defeat;
And though the archer sat in tender eyes
Of village lasses, and from thence shot forth
His arrows, winged with sweet and fond desire,
He passed unscathed upon his happy way.
The darts all glanced aside, and made no wound
In heart that yet was tender as a maid's,

While strong and manly, as becomes a man.
Summer had reached its noon, and sweetest scents
Were blown from fields on which the mower toiled,
Whetting his scythe amongst the new-mown hay;
And roses flushed the hedges, and the air
Was balm, when to the little village came
A widow, with her only living child,—
A maiden, over whose fair head had rolled
Some eighteen years. Three more as fair as she
The mourning mother laid within the grave
With many tears, and yearnings of the heart.
Her husband had been pastor 'mongst the hills;
His means but modest, and his wants but few.
Son of a Dalesman he, whose greatest pride,
Whose fondest wish was that a boy of his
Should pass through college onward to the Church.
His hope was granted, and his son became
The father of his people in a cure
Amongst the mountains, where he lived and toiled,
And consecrated all his health and strength
To sacred ministries of love. His joy
It was as true ambassador of Christ
To lure men from the world, and lead to God;
To speak a word in season to the sad,

And with the pebble and the sling of truth,
To smite some giant falsehood in the brow,
And fell it to the earth. Tender he was,
And true,—a godly man, who felt and lived
The truths he preached; and by the silent force
Of a good life, whose power was holiness,
Drew many after him to Christ and heaven.
As thus he daily walked the world with God,
There came the call which summoned him up higher.
"He was not, for God took him" to Himself,
And poorer was the parish for his loss.
His mourning widow was compelled to leave
Her happy home,—the only home she knew
Since that bright summer morn he proudly bore
Her from the altar as his wedded bride.
So weeping, with her only child, she said
"Farewell" to house and scenes endeared by ties
So firm, so fond, they might be rent in twain,
But always felt and prized. Her means were small,
Enabled her to live, and hardly more.
With these she sought and found a modest place,
Where she might spend her latter days in peace.
Fair home was hers, with rose and ivy wreathed,
And close to Rydal, near the placid lake,

Whose waters mirror Loughrigg in their wave.
Here she and Ellen lived right well content,
Not seeking any, only sought by few.
No fairer maid in all the country round
Than Ellen, and none gentler or more kind.
A heart as open as her brow, a cheek
Where rose and lily blended into one;
Eyes dark and large, and of a wondrous depth,
Liquid and lustrous as the evening star;
And glossy hair as shadowy as the night.
A graceful mien, a light elastic step,
A heart as tender as her mind was pure;
A soul that early had drunk in with joy
All that is written in the Book of God,
Of what is good and true, honest and just,
All lovely things, and things of good report.
Pensive her beauty—pensive, though not sad;
Expression ever varied on her face,
Responsive to the feelings of a heart
That all emotions felt of grave or gay,
Or those that filled the eye with dimming tears,
Or those that lighted all the face with smiles.
Ellen and Philip met,—were friends at once,
Kindred their spirits, and their tastes alike.

They loved the hills, the breezes of the morn;
The meadows gemmed with glistening dew, the streams
That flowing from the mountains sought the lake;
Clear noons, and twilight eves, and balmy nights.
The same with books. Here, too, their tastes agreed.
The favourite of one was favourite
Of both; and many a happy hour was spent
Under the branches of a leafy elm,
Which threw cool shadows 'thwart her mother's croft,
Reading such volumes, treasures new and old,
Which friend had lent, or which enriched the shelves
Of Philip's, or of Ellen's cottage home.
And what could all this lead to but one end?
To Philip's life there came an added charm,
Which made his days one happy, blessed spring,—
A May-time, redolent of hope and joy.
And what of Ellen? Only this she knew,
That she was happy; and no thought beyond
Came in to trouble, or to vex her mind
Concerning what might come, or what might be,—
It was enough for her to live, to breathe,
To drink the air, roam over hills and fells,
To feel sweet Nature's influence around,
And walk a world sunned by the smile of God.

Will Vipont was a statesman's son, and near
Akin to Agnes—was indeed her cousin,
Child of her mother's brother; and their homes
From childhood were not far apart, a field
Was all that lay between, where daisies grew,
And where they oft had played, both well content.
Stalwart and tall was Will, good-looking too,
Fonder of rustic sports and games than books;
Well did he love to follow through the brake
Or on his native fells the tawny fox,
With sound of horn, and cry of baying hound,
And swiftest of the swift to be in time
To see poor Reynard die. And often too,
When Autumn amber colour laid upon
The hills, and changed their green to gold, his gun
Roused all the echoes with sharp-sounding ring.
Right fond was he of fishing, and knew well
Each freshet, and each cool clear pool where lay
The speckled trout. In temper arrogant,
Though generous; gay, full of spirits, quick;
Was one who valued not himself below
His proper worth, and could not brook to be
Outstripped by others in the race he wished
To win. Withal he was infirm of will,—

Impulsive, wayward, and was somewhat fond
Of company,—not always of the best;
Would sit carousing late into the night
When jovial fellows gathered round the board.
From early years his heart had gone with all
Its force and strength to Ellen. Though he ruled
All others, he was ruled and swayed by her,
And owned the thraldom of her voice and will.
He never thought of her but as his own;
Took it for granted she would be his wife;
Nor would it have amazed him more to see
The sun stand still from golden noon till eve,
As once on Gibeon,—where it stayed its course
Until the moon with wondering face appeared,
And silvered all the heights of Ajalon,—
Than to hear doubt expressed that Ellen was
To be his wife, and share his future home.
And yet no word between them ever passed
Sealing his hopes as true. No vow did he
Exact, no promise passed his lips or hers;
So safe he thought himself of what he wished.
When Ellen's father died, and she removed
To Rydal, it was just the same. He came
And went at will. Sometimes he stayed for days,

At others not so long, but always found
The welcome of a greeting and a smile.
Now chanced it more than once that when he came
Philip was at the cottage too; and though
At first his visits gave him no concern,
Yet when he chanced again and yet again
To find him there, he liked it not; indeed,
Felt a dark trouble moving at his heart;
And once some bitter words leaped to his lips,
And anger glowed within his eyes, and shook
His voice, which, trembling, grew all hoarse and harsh,
As that of some wild bird, when to his nest,
Where sits his mate upon her callow brood,
Comes one intent to harry or destroy.
Wilfred—for love is quick to see—at once
Felt, "here is rival for sweet Ellen's love,"
And all his heart grew sick and faint with fear.
He thought in William's face he saw his doom,—
That they were more than cousins—more than friends,
And that they loved; that he for all these months
Had fed a hope which like the marish fire
Had only lured him on to dark despair.
And so he left the cottage with a heart
From which all life was crushed and hope was gone,

And wandered on until the sun had sunk
Behind the hills, and silver steams of mist
Came o'er the valley from the evening dews,
And drew a chilly veil 'twixt earth and sky.
Then home he went, but not to bed or sleep,
For all night through he battled with himself,
And passed the hours in one long agony,
Nor let God go until He bless'd him there,
(As Jacob held the angel at the ford),
And when the Day-spring fringed the hills with light,
It found him on his knees, but calm and still.

Ellen had seen how Will was chafed, had seen
The jealous fire that burned within his eyes,
And her quick woman's instinct caught the truth
At once; and there came flashing on her mind,
Like to a revelation, feelings—thoughts
That hitherto had dormant lain and still,
As sleeps the lightning veiled within the cloud,
But ever ready to leap forth in flame.
Then o'er her neck and face rushed the warm blood;
And thrilled her heart as she stood quivering there,
And self-revealed. And now she saw the gulf
Which opened at her feet, and on whose brink

She trembled, dizzy with a dreadful fear.
Will marked her agitation, and resolved
To claim her his, at once secure her hand,
And have her promise she should be his wife.
And so he pleaded earnestly his suit,—
Their love from childhood's days, their kinship too;
The silent, if not spoken, hopes she gave
That she was his in heart, and would be his
In marriage,—pleaded on his knees for this.
Prayed her to shine within his home a star
As she already shone within his heart.
She sat all pale before him as he spoke,
Sorrow and pity looking from her eyes
Through tears that gathered there, but did not fall,
Held back by firm resolve, and self-control,
And through the anguish of that bitter hour
Was felt keen self-reproach, that like a knife
Cuts to the heart, and draws the welling blood.
"Some months ago it might have been perhaps,
Not now." This, 'midst her agony, rose clear
Before her mind—"not now." It could not be.
Plainly she saw she did not love the man
That knelt before her, nor had ever loved.
That great deep love which, blending into one

Two spirits, welds, and knits them each to each,
And kindles on the altar of the heart
A pure and sacred flame which burns till death,
She never had for William. This was plain
To her, and lay before her just as clear
As lay that sunbeam on the parlour floor.
And this, in answer to his pleading prayer,
She tried to tell him gently as she could,
With tears that now would flow, and voice that shook
And broke in telling. William heard with ear
Which at the first was all incredulous,—
Could not believe—would not believe; and then,
With many a cry, half angry and half sad,
Broke in upon her words, until at last
The bitter truth grew slowly on his mind,
And stung him to the heart, and left his cheek
All blanched, and big drops stood upon his brow.
Then maddened by his anguish, passion-tost,
He spake words fierce and wild, and loaded her
With undeserved reproaches, cursing Philip,
And said, "he claimed her his, would make her his,
Would look upon her as his own till death;
And woe betide the man who dared to come
Between them, or as rival cross his path."

He left the cottage with a whirling brain
And burning heart, all reckless where he went,
With one wish only, that from the dark cloud
Might burst the thunder, break the lightning flash,
And strike him dead, and Ellen too, and Ray.
Then wretched, stung to agony, and mad,
He sought "The Eagle," and there spent the night
With boon companions in a wild debauch.

Philip and Ellen had not met for days,
Not since the evening when he thought he read
In William's eyes and hers their mutual love.
He felt that absence was the only course
For his own peace—fool, blind fool that he was,
Who hopes had cherished empty as the air.
He now would leave the valley for a time;
But where to go he knew not, cared not much
Indeed. The world was all a blank to him.
And then his course was shaped. With early dawn
He would be far upon his way from home,
Northward across the border to a friend,
Who occupied a little household farm
Amidst the fertile fields of fair Dumfries.
This evening he would take a long last look

Of Rydal, and the home where Ellen dwelt;
Not venture near, but from a neighbour's field,
And where, beneath the sheltering trees, he might
Be free from observation. As he passed
Beyond the meadow with its swelling knolls
Of emerald green, where rise the dark-branched pines,
And where, upon the charmed eye, a scene
Of beauty bursts—Loughrigg, the Park, Nab's Scar—
He started, stopped, and all the tell-tale blood
Mounted in crimson eddies to his brow;
For there was Ellen, seated on the bridge
That spans the Rotha's clear and rapid stream.
She was alone, and looking worn and pale,
White as the rose she wore upon her heart;
She saw him coming, started to her feet,
Sat down again, and trembled as a leaf
That shivers on the aspen. Philip stood
A moment all uncertain what to do;
Then joined her, spake some hurried words, confused,
And sat beside her on the little bridge,
And saw the river gliding calm below,
Reflecting in its stream the rosy light
That now began to flush the evening sky.
Scarce knew he what he said; he spake as thro'

A dream, and hardly heard her low replies—
More gave he words to than he meant at first.
Until at length, and all unwittingly,
There came the low confession of his love,
His hopes, his disappointment, and despair.

He never knew—all was so sudden, strange,
Beyond his thought, beyond his wildest dream—
How came the quick revulsion o'er his mind,
How passed the anguish, or how rose the hope
That thrilled him with a joy so keen, it was
Almost akin to pain. O sweet! O sweet!
O maiden blush that mantled o'er the cheek!
O voice all tremulous and low with love!
O soft dark eyes down dropt beneath their lids,
And bright with tears of happiness, not pain!
And then they wandered o'er the dewless grass,
And hand in hand pursued their happy way;
The stars came out in heaven round the moon,
The rapid Rotha rippled with sweet sound,
Making melodious murmurs in their ear;
Whilst in the greenwood-tree the night-thrush sang,
And all the air was laden with sweet scents,
And wafted odours from a balmy night,

Though fresh with eager breath of coming fall.
It seemed as if at one great sudden bound
Earth had been passed, and Paradise regained.
Long hours had passed since Michael's house was still,
When Philip, sleepless, and his bed unpressed,
Threw ope his casement, leaned into the night,
And heard the river, and one bird's sweet song.
Then looked he on the skies aglow with stars,
And saw the flashing of the northern lights,
That spread like flame along the cloudless vault—
A bright Auroral glory like the dawn,—
It seem'd as tho' thro' thin transparent skies
There burst the shinings of the Great White Throne,
Which made the heavens a splendour far and near;
Then flow'd his heart in song, but low and soft,
As singing to himself, with none to hear:—

Shine on, fair moon, in the skies afar;
Glitter and sparkle, O beautiful star!
Was there ever on earth such a night as this?
Shine, O shine!
I tremble and thrill with a nameless bliss,
She told me, my love, she was mine, all mine.

Sing on, sweet bird, sing loud and strong,
Flood all the air with your joyous song;
My heart it aches with delicious pain.
Sing, O sing!
I long to take up, and to catch your strain,
For I kissed her hand with the little ring.

Flow, river, flow, glide soft and clear,
And trickle in music upon my ear;
Is it real, or is it a dream?
Flow, river, flow!
Let me whisper my joy to your quiet stream,
For her heart is all mine, all mine, I know.

Philip and Ellen met full often now;
But 'midst their happiness a shade at times
Cross'd Ellen's brow. She thought of William's love,
And how unconsciously she had beguiled
Him into thinking that it was returned.
This often laid a weight upon her heart.
Nor could she e'er forget the words he spake,—
"He claimed her his, by silent sanction given
To love she must have known was always hers;
And by the years through which this one hope ran

A golden thread in all his web of life,
That he should at the altar make her his."
"Remove the thread," he said, and "his would be
A spoiled and ravelled life, without an aim,
All tangled, wild, all meaningless, confused."
She had not thought of this in her first joy—
A joy so great, like Aaron's mystic rod,
It every other thought and care absorbed,
And stood out in its magnitude alone.
But now came memories which vexed her mind,
And wrought upon her so, she made resolve
Never to wed till William should declare
Her free, or wed himself some other maid.
Philip she would release if he so pleased,
Nor bind him to a service for her sake
That might run out the years that Jacob served
For Rachel. Philip did not please. His love
For Ellen was as true, as deep, as fond,
As ever stirred within the breast of man.
Wait seven years? Fourteen? Aye, twice fourteen,
And then feel overpaid by that sweet day
On which God gave him Ellen as a wife.

So passed the days, the weeks, the months,

Yet not without sweet solace as they passed.
But seldom William came, and when he did,
His visits were but brief, and left behind
Much pain and grief to all who loved him most.
Rumours there were of wild and reckless hours
Spent with the worst, of drinking-bouts held long
Through night, till morning thro' the casement looked
And blushed to find a shameless crew still there,
Debased to something lower far than men.
Oh, cursed vice! more cruel than the grave!
Oh, shameful fetters, forged in fires of hell!
Oh, frightful source of sorrow and disease,
Of crime, starvation, devilry, and death.
Scarcely a winter passed within the Vale
But some man fell a victim to this vice,
And staggered drunken to God's judgment-seat,
Uncalled, untimely, unprepared to die.
Often, in bitter anguish of remorse,
That tore the heart as with a vulture's beak,
Because of wife and children slowly starved,
Some wretch would rush on death; and from the Lake
A ghastly face was drawn—white, wan, and cold—
Which shrouded in the sere-cloths of the tomb,

Was laid, with bleeding of the heart, and tears,
And hopeless sorrow, in a drunkard's grave.

William, this autumn, came to Ambleside,
Reckless as ever, riotous and wild;
Masking a wretched heart in borrowed smiles,
The wreck of his old self, with hollow laugh,
That rang all false like base and bastard coin.
Too often was he found a guest in homes
Where song, and laughter, and the ribald jest
Went round, where cups were quaffed, and men drank long
And deep; and hollow cheeks, and livid lips,
And drink-blotched faces gathered round their cups.
One morning, after bout the night before,
He took a bright young boy, son of a friend—
A boy of promise whom he loved right well,
Resolved to have a day on Windermere,
And cool with mountain air his fevered head.
The morn was threatening dark with heavy clouds,
Bitter with whistling winds that boded storm.
Friends warned him not to go, to bide within,
Nor venture on the Lake, which showed great waves
And beat in angry murmurs 'gainst the shore.
Not he, he would not stay; he knew not fear,

Laughed at all dangers, liked the wind and storm,
And hoped a blast might blow from all the hills,
And churn the waves to foam, and fill the sails,
And drive the dancing boat along the flood.
Yes, Lancelot, the boy, should come along.
This Lancelot was his mother's only child,
And she a widow. All her yearning heart
Was in the lad. He was her age's stay,
The only tie that bound her to the world.
Nought knew she of this visit to the Lake;
Else would have laid commands on Lancelot,
And kept him with her, but she was not told;
And, truth to say, the boy liked well the sport,
And though his mother's wish had kept him back,
Yet nothing loth, and fearless of all ill,
He gladly went with William to the boat.
They launched, and hoisted sail, and for a time
The little yacht went gallantly along,
And danced and leaped upon the curling waves.
William enjoyed the motion, and the breeze,
Which brought the colour to his faded cheek,
And fanned his face, and stirred his hair, and made
His blood course quickly thro' his stalwart frame;
While Lancelot laughed, and shouted in his glee.

So for a time. But now a tempest arose;
Blowing in gusty squalls down all the hills,
Which wrought the waters into sheets of foam,
And caught the sails with such an angry blast,
And smote the boat so heavily on the side,
That first she plunged beneath the swelling waves,
Then righted, struggling like a living thing,
Then turning over, filled, and quickly sank.
William and Lancelot were both sucked down
Beneath the surging waves. When William rose
He battled, as men battle for dear life.
Good swimmer was he; with an arm was made
To buffet the great waves, and beat them back,
And use them as strong oars to help him on.
Need had he now of all his strength and skill;
For did not heart and hope keep bravely up,
A watery grave would claim him for its prey.
Before he struck out for the shore, he looked
For Lancelot, but Lancelot never rose;
Stunned peradventure by the falling mast,
Or caught in tackling of the boat, or sail—
So held by death, that would not let him go.
William, with one last look that scann'd the waves
But saw not him he looked for, then struck out,

Nor ever would have reached the land,
Had not a boat, manned by four gallant men,
Put out from shore, and brought the needed help,
And snatching from the waves the exhausted man,
In safety landed him at Waterhead.
There many of the villagers had come,
Fearful and anxious; and amongst them all
Poor Lancelot's mother, wan as any corpse.
"My boy! my boy!" she cried, and wrung her hands,
And as her grey hairs streamed upon the wind,
And tears chased one another down her cheek,
Her passionate cry was heard in every lull,
"My boy! my boy! my Lancelot! save my boy!"
And on her knees she sank, and raised her eyes
To heav'n, and prayed for pity, prayed that He
Would spare her son, her only hope, her joy.
When the boat grounded on the strand, she rushed
With eager step and hungry eyes, to look,
To search, for one loved object; and when, alas!
She saw that William was alone, a shrill
Sharp shriek of anguish broke from heart and lips—
A cry, that in its wild despair rang loud
In William's ear for many a bitter day.
And still, "My boy! my Lancelot!" was her cry;

And then she swooned, and pitying neighbours bore
Her to a lonely home, and laid her there
On bed she never left till carried thence,
To rest beside the husband of her youth
In the churchyard that crowns the Chapel Hill.
The body of young Lancelot was found
The day before his mother's funeral.
One bell was tolled for both, one service read
For mother and for son. And now they sleep
Close to each other in one common grave.
And William,—oh the sorrow and regret,
The bitter sorrow, and the wild regret,
The self-reproach, the dire remorse, the woe!
'Twere vain to picture his great agony,
Or tell the grief that like a living fire
Preyed on his heart, and burnt into his brain.
And better still, when the first horror passed,
There came a calmer time of penitence,
And healing tears, and prayers, and cries for grace,
As the full rush of shame and sorrow swept
Across his mind. The boy he loved so well!
Was he not guilty of poor Lancelot's death?
His mother's too, who, broken-hearted, killed
By the great desolation of her home,

Went sorrowing and childless to the grave.
The Alehouse, how he cursed it in his heart,
And how he loathed himself for all his sin.
There was one night he spent alone in prayer,
In weeping, and in conflict sharp as death.
From out the dead forgotten past there rose
The ghosts of sin that shook his soul with dread.
The buried vice, the long-forgotten scoff,
The selfish lust, the oath, the drunkenness;
And as they came before him at the call
Of conscience—came, a ghastly company—
It seem'd if hell already had begun;
The gnawing anguish of the deathless worm,
The scathing torture of the quenchless fire.
With God he wrestled till the break of day;
And when the morning looked in at his room,
His chamber had become a Peniel,
Where he and Christ had met each face to face,
And whence he went a humbled, contrite man.

Soon thoughts of Ellen came across his mind,
Softened by sorrow; and as one whom grace
Had found, he felt there was a duty to discharge
Without delay. He did discharge it too—
Discharged it well. To Ellen he told all,—

His sin, his shame, his penitence ; resigned
All claim upon her hand, and, with a pang
Felt at the heart, spake of her happiness
In Philip's love. As for himself, he said,
His mind was now made up to seek a home
In the far West, where he might enter on
A fresh career, and leave behind the dark,
The guilty past—leave it behind for ever !
And Ellen heard through many flowing tears,
With many a prayer for pardon, had she wronged,
Or led him on unconsciously to hope,
Where hope was none. And so they parted both,
Nor saw they ever one another more.

When genial spring returned with vernal flowers,
And May was in her beauty and her bloom,
When larks were singing in the cloudless blue,
And in the woods the cuckoo's voice was heard,
When hyacinths were trembling in the glade,
And the sweet violet scented all the banks,
When the pale primrose starr'd the shady ways,
One golden morn the village was astir,
And all seemed ready for a holiday.
Neighbours were seen in gossip at their doors

The children of the schools, clad in their best,
Held lapfuls of sweet flowers, or carried them
In rustic baskets; on all faces shone
The bright reflection of some holiday.
It was the morn when Philip was to stand
With Ellen at the altar as his bride.
The future lay before them one rich land
Of promise, where the milk and honey flowed;
For they were one in heart, in faith, in hope—
In all that sheds a brightness on the world,
Or gilds the far eternity with joy.
And so she placed her hand in his with trust,
And went they forth from that rude house of prayer,
With God's own blessing resting on their heads,
To walk for years in happy bonds of love,
While children sprang around their path like flowers,
To call them bless'd, and crown their marriage joy.

DEVOTIONAL POEMS.

DYING WORDS.

"When I am dead, think of me as in the next room. It is the same house, only one is to the back, and the other to the front."

—*Lady Augusta Stanley.*

EAREST, when I have passed from earth away,
And from my glass has run out all the sand,
When you no more shall see me day by day,
Or feel the loving pressure of my hand,
And I have gone into the shadowy land,
I ask for this,—you will not say me nay,—
That memories of me be free from gloom,
Oh, "think of me as in the other room!"

Sorrow not overmuch, nor greatly weep,
Mourning because I am amongst the dead;
Rather believe I only am asleep,
And dreaming sweetly on a painless bed,
Where God has smoothed the pillow for my head,
And bright-winged angels watch around me keep.

Oh, speak not of me in the silent tomb,*
But "think of me as in the other room."

"The other room"—the house is just the same;
The chambers vary as regards the place—
One lieth to the front, where all aflame
The sky is glowing with the sun's bright face;
The other, to the back, has dimmer grace,
Set also in a smaller, meaner frame.
But still, as both are in our Father's home,
"Think I am only in the other room."

I know, belov'd, my loss will make you sad,
I know full well you cannot choose, but grieve;
But think of all the blessedness we've had.
O home, more happy than I could conceive!
O God, who in my lot such bliss did weave!
O love, for twelve sweet years which made me glad!
Why should dark sorrow all your life consume
When I but pass into "the other room"?

* This line originally ran thus, "Let no thought ever link me with the tomb," but has been altered in deference to a suggestion of the late lamented Dean of Westminster, who felt that as it now stands it better interpreted "both his own feelings and hers." To have known from himself that "the Poem faithfully expresses the spirit of those last words and last days," is naturally a great gratification to the writer.

True, often in the gathering shades of night,
When sitting by our dear hearth all alone,
Your heart will ache, because you think the light,
The bloom, from off your life has passed and gone,
And left it joyless, colourless, and wan,
Bereaved of all you say did make it bright.
But let your mind its calm and peace resume,
And "think of me as in the other room."

And when you feel aweary of the strife
With sin and sorrow, falsehood, wrong and pain,
Wishing for one who used to cheer your life,
Whose joy it was to comfort and sustain,
And help you bear the pressure and the strain,
Whose dearest thought is this—she is your wife,
Will it not bring the light back to your home,
To "think that I am in the other room"?

And when a silence broods o'er stair and hall,
Unbroken by a voice you loved to hear,
And when I answer not, although you call,
Yet still believing I am very near,
This one sweet thought will check the rising tear,
And hold it on the cheek before it fall,—

I may step any time from out the gloom,
Being so near you in "the other room."

"The other room," beloved, not far away,
For though removed a little from your sight,
I shall be ever near you, day by day,
And when the evening darkens into night;
And surely it will be a strange delight,
Which all my pain and grief will overpay,
To wait the "little while," till you shall come,
And join me in our Father's "other room."

LAST WORDS.

"That is what I should like—serving continually. Oh, I trust there will be work for me where I am going!"

—*Lady Augusta Stanley.*

OU speak of "rest," this will indeed be sweet,
Ease for the aching heart and throbbing brain;
No more the sickness, or the fever's heat,
The bitter anguish, or the wasting pain.
Oh, to lie ever in my Saviour's breast!
Never to weep, or feel a pang again!
Nothing to mar, nothing to break my rest!
But, to content me, "rest" itself were vain;
Nay, even streams of pleasure ever flowing,
"I trust there will be work for me where I am going."

You speak of "glory," and it will be bliss
To see the City shining in God's light;
And lying here, I often think of this,—
The gates of pearl, the walls of jasper bright;
But were this all, a something I should lose;
In endless service is my true delight,

And this the blessedness that I would choose ;
For what, tho' splendours flashed upon my sight,
And heaven to me was all its wonders showing,
"Were there no work for me to do where I am going !"

You speak of "joy ;" and rapture it will be
To take the harp and celebrate His praise ;
To stand where flames the bright and crystal sea,
And sing the new sweet song—its notes to raise
Beneath the shadow of the rainbow'd throne ;
To magnify my Saviour's works and ways,
And all His mercies and His love to own ;
But not with song would I fill all my days.
Burns there a wish, like flame within me glowing,
"I trust there will be work for me where I am going."

It has been dear, God knows how dear to me,
The blessedness of serving Him to prove,
A lowly handmaiden of His to be,
And by thy side in service sweet to move,
So, day by day, to do His holy will.
Pleasant to us these ministries of love,
Pleasant the happy hours with work to fill,
Ah, this was joy all other joys above !

Canst wonder then this thought is in me growing,
"Will there be work for me to do where I am going?"

Sweet work we had, belov'd. To tend the poor,
To soothe the sorrowful, console the sad;
To bind up broken hearts, the sick to cure,
To dry the weeping eye, make mourners glad;
To guide the sinful and the wandering home,
Stoop to the fallen, deeming none too bad
For Him who bids the very worst to come,
And who for deepest sores a balsam had.
And as there was a reaping after sowing,
"God give me work to do for Him where I am going!"

What ministries are *there*—ah, who can say!
What possibilities of work for those
Who never weary, "rest not night or day,"
Whose labour is not toil, nor needs repose.
Ah, as they climb new heights of glory still,
And heaven upon their vision ever grows,
And fresh unveilings of the Father's will,
What forms of service shall not God disclose!
The current of my hopes to this is flowing,
"I trust there will be work to do where I am going."

"AND THERE WAS NO MORE SEA."

(Rev. xxi. 2.)

FAIN would for a moment try to cope
With what it holds to us of happy hope,
The blessed promise full of melody
To John in Patmos—"There was no more sea."

I gaze upon wide ocean's rolling waves,
Far as the verge where sea and sky are one,
Guessing the secrets of the sunless caves
That lie beneath the waters fathoms down.
What gorges deep, what hills and valleys there!
What wondrous creatures walk the shell-strewn floor!
What wealth of pearl and gem! what flowers fair,
That bloom in depths the eye cannot explore!
So hope of perfect knowledge seems to me
Borne on the promise, "There was no more sea."

As forms of life all strange haunt these blue glooms
That secret are as death, dark, unrevealed;
As beauty, valour, strength, have here found tombs,
And far beneath the waters lie concealed,
So God moves darkly through the mighty deeps,
And all in vain we strive to pierce or scan
The wave of mystery that round Him sweeps,
And hides Him from the ken of mortal man:
How blessèd, then, that all shall fathomed be,—
For in the future shall be "no more sea."

"His judgments are a deep," the Psalmist says;
"His footsteps are not seen, His paths unknown:"
Past finding out are all His mighty ways;
He holdeth back the splendours of His throne.
But we shall yet behold Him face to face,
And "know as we are known," and in His light
Shall scale the heights and scan the depths of grace,
And all His ways shall open lie to sight,—
Their mysteries unfolded, when that He
Fulfils the promise, "There was no more sea."

The sea! It lifts its waters up on high;
Wild tempests o'er it madly rage and swell,

That hurl its weltering foam against the sky,
While seethe its surges like the waves of hell,
And in their power untamed, and passionate force,
Heedless and pitiless they hurry on.
Great ships it drives like playthings from their course,
Or in its eddying whirlpools sucks them down,—
The quelling then of lawless might to me
Breaks through the words, "And there was no more sea."

"The floods lift up their voice on high, O God,
The floods lift up their waves," the Psalmist sings;
Thus men rebel against Thy sceptred rod,
And of their thoughts they boast them lords and kings.
But Thou art mighty, mightier than all;
In vain they chafe and struggle 'gainst Thy sway,
As frets the ocean 'gainst its passive wall
Which doth the fury of their billows stay;
So that all wills to Thine shall subject be,
Gleams in the vision, "There was no more sea."

The sea! How restless under sun and star,
And full of changeful moods to waken dread,—
Now calm, now with the elements at war,
And moaning wild as one that wails the dead;

Now casting up dank weeds, and shells, and mire,
As into fury lashed its waters break,
And spend themselves in angry, futile ire
Against the rock they have no power to shake.
And thus a hope of times from unrest free,
These words hold forth—"And there was no more sea."

The sea divides, it separates us here
From those we love, and hold most to our heart;
It rolls between us and the near and dear,
Its cruel waters hold us far apart.
We gaze across its billows with a sigh,
In envy of the sea-bird's pinions fleet,
Wishing to borrow wings that we might fly
To those we yearn, but yearn in vain, to greet;
But separation never more shall be
In the bright world where there is "no more sea."

"And there was no more sea." Thrice blessèd thought!
No wreck of life or hope on that fair strand;
No sad "farewells" with bitter anguish fraught;
No change or trouble in that changeless land;
No billows breaking at our feet in foam;
No partings of the loved and loving more;

No heart-sick longings for the old dear home,
But everlasting unions on its shore;
Circles unbroken,—and this, and more when we
Shall reach the haven "where there is no more sea."

Methinks I see a wild tempestuous night,
A boat tossed on the waters to and fro,
Where stands a figure in the pale moonlight,
God-like, Divine, whose words majestic flow
Along the waves in this sublime command,
"Peace, and be still." The winds forget to sigh;
The storm sinks to a murmur on the strand,
In the blue lake are glassed the stars on high;
And in that scene is pictured forth to me
The calm eternal "when there is no sea."

All troubles gone, for mystery no place,
Rebellion silenced, cruel wrong no more;
Instead thereof the light from God's own face,
Eternal joy, and rest; a tranquil shore
Where no storm drives, no brawling tempests come,
And all is peace, and blessedness, and calm;
The fair green pastures of our Father's home,
The river from the Throne and from the Lamb;—
This, and all grace the promise holds in fee—
This glorious promise, "There was no more sea."

TO A CHILD.

DEAR child, to-morrow two years old,
What wonders in thy large blue eyes,
That gaze with such a sweet surprise
On all around, half shy, half bold;
Thy mouth a rosebud, fragrant, sweet,
A sweeter never has been seen;
A purer child-heart never beat
Than thine, Aleen.

There, lying on the summer grass,
'Mid half-blown roses fresh and fair,
An aureole crown thy sunny hair;
You laugh to see the shadows pass,
And shout with rare and true delight,
As butterflies in brilliant sheen
Flash in their beauty on your sight,
Darling Aleen.

The present is enough for thee;
No anxious thought the future brings;
Careless thou art as bird that sings
On leafy bough of yonder tree;
Enough for thee the balmy day,
Blue skies that gently o'er thee lean,
Sweet scents that meet thee from the hay,
Joyous Aleen.

Happy it is indeed to know
Children are always with us here;
They save us from despair and fear,
In this sad world of grief and woe;
For in their innocence and love,
A pledge of heaven by us is seen;
Of such the kingdom is above,
As thou, Aleen.

When looking in thy frank true eyes,
I often think that thou canst see
Things hidden from the world and me,
And veiled as yet in Paradise;

That thou may'st hear the sounding sweep
Of anthems floating down serene,
From heaven's own cadenced music deep,
My sweet Aleen.

Indeed I cannot choose but think
Thy wisdom larger is than mine—
A wisdom deeper, more divine;
That thou, dear little one, dost drink
Of springs that are unknown to me,
And by these tear-dimm'd eyes unseen,
But open founts of joy to thee,
Dearest Aleen.

It may be so. For God conceals
Much from the prudent and the wise,
That He unto the babe's clear eyes
In gracious tenderness reveals.
Child! thou art sent from higher sphere
In fittest way God's grace to prove;
None other proof we need, I ween,
That "God is good," that "God is Love,"
Than thou, Aleen.

BEFORE.

WE watched beside her thro' the night—
Thro' night unto the morning grey,
Till on the casement smote the light,
And sudden flashed the day.

She kept all thro' a silence deep,
With closed and heavy-lidded eye,
And murmurs as of one asleep,
And now and then a sigh.

Oh, passing sweet she was and fair,
A fragrant lily in its prime,
That fed on honey'd dew and air,
Had blossomed for a time!

Her two white hands extended were
Upon the little snowy bed;
The rippling of her golden hair
A glory round her head.

The little lamp we lit at night,
Which faintly burnt with dull red glow,
Scarce broke the darkness with its light,
Or showed the bed of snow.

It stood upon a table near,
It flickered low, it flickered high;
We wondered, with a strange sad fear,
Which life should soonest die.

One now threw back the window pane,
The close-drawn curtains were withdrawn;
There came a smell of fresh'ning rain
From off the fragrant lawn.

And in the dim and dewy grove,
The sweet birds piped from every bush;
'Midst glistening boughs sang songs of love—
Sweetest of all, the thrush.

We did not speak or move the while,
Fast held in wonder to our place,
Watching a rare and radiant smile
Transfigure all her face.

But hushed, and awed, and very still,
We prayed in thrilling silence near;
And down our faces flowed at will,
Unchecked, the burning tear.

When all at once, as we stood there,
There rose a sudden, startling cry,
That stayed our weeping, checked our prayer,
As it came ringing by.

She started forward on the bed,
She raised her trembling hands on high;
All paleness from the face had fled,
Now flushed with ecstasy.

Her eyes were lifted up to heaven,
Her parted lips did gently stir;
We felt Christ, and the Spirits seven,
Communion held with her.

Her look of rapture grew and grew,
As tho' before her wondering sight
There stretched the way she must pass thro',
All lined with angels bright.

Our hearts were filled with deep'ning awe,
We dared not move, or speak a word;
We knew she saw what no one saw,
And heard what no one heard.

So for a space the rapture lay
Upon her glowing cheek and brow;
And dawnings of a brighter day
Seemed breaking on her now.

The arms relaxed, a shadow stole
O'er quivering lip, and cheek, and brow;
We knew full well the golden bowl
Was being broken now.

I clasped her gently to my breast,
And held her closely there, until
The aching head had sunk to rest,
The tossing arms were still.

The glory soon was past and gone,
The light went slowly from her eyes,
Though still beneath their lashes shone
A look of sweet surprise.

We knew that she had passed away,
So deep the awe upon her face;
We knew her ransom'd spirit lay
Fast clasped in Christ's embrace;

Who called her to His home above,
And drew her to His happy side;
Where now they walked in perfect love,
The Bridegroom and His Bride.

AFTER.

HID my face, I spake no word,
I fell upon the bed and wept;
And there, while nothing moved or stirred,
Shaken by grief I slept.

I slept at first a restless sleep,
With throbbing heart and aching head;
For even slumber's self did keep
Some memories of the dead.

I dreamt. The sorrow passed away,
I wept no more, no longer sighed,
Though in the chamber where she lay,
And where that morn she died.

Methought I saw her after death,
And knowing well that she was dead;
And yet no terror choked my breath,
Or bowed my wondering head.

I saw her now a spirit bright,
Freed from the weak and mortal frame,
And clad in raiment all of light,
Which flashed like lambent flame.

The form that lay there stilled in death,
That bent before his cruel power,
Was but the fair and outward sheath
That held the fragrant flower.

She met my gaze with such a look,
It to my very soul did thrill;
And all my quivering pulses shook,
And all my heart stood still.

A yearning love was in my eye,
I felt that she was leaving me;
I cried, "Oh, let me also die,
That I may go with thee!"

While thus I spake, a voice I heard,
Come ringing down the heavens afar;
And sweeter sounded every word,
Than song of Morning Star.

She turned to hear the voice that spoke,
And glowing rapture filled her eye;
And as upon her ear it broke,
Her glance was raised on high.

She passed at once upon the way
That leads through depths of dazzling light,
To worlds where everlasting day,
Place never gives to night.

I saw her gliding up on high,
Where burning suns in glory move;
I saw her mounting thro' the sky,
Drawn by the force of love.

Her path lay thro' the star-strewn skies,
By argent moon, keen, bright, and clear;
Orb after orb flashed on her eyes,
Globed each in silver sphere.

Thus held she on her upward way,
Where gleam the golden gates afar;
At length beneath her feet there lay,
Both sun, and moon, and star.

And still she kept her upward flight,
Until she reached the happy place,
Where God dwells in the perfect light,
And shows His awful face.

Thro' Heaven's door there poured a flood
Of melody and thrilling song;
And, bathed in glory, there she stood,
Close to the shining throng.

And One stepped forth to meet her there,
A crown upon His kingly brow,
With dazzling eyes and radiant hair,
And face with love aglow.

He took her to the Fountain's brink,
Whence flow the living rills of light;
And, stooping down, I saw her drink
The waters pure and bright.

I heard the six-winged Seraphim,
As they beheld her forward come,
Pause in their loud adoring hymn,
To bid her welcome home.

Christ led her then beneath the shade
Of the green mystic Tree of Life,
Whose fragrant leaves fall not, nor fade,
Whose boughs with fruit are rife.

She plucked with joy the blushing flowers,
That grew in happy gardens there,
And never wither as do ours,
But bloom for ever fair.

And there I saw the streets of gold,
And sea of glass that burned with fire,
And starry gates their doors unrolled,
As He led her ever higher.

I heard the holy angels cry,
One to another, as they sang,
In strange delicious melody,
That thro' the heavens rang.

I heard her voice amongst the choir,
And knew it well from all the rest;
And as she struck her golden lyre,
Methought it sounded best.

And still she moved 'midst rainbow dyes,
Along the crystal floor of heaven,
Full in the Day of Paradise,
Which never wanes to even.

And so Christ led her ever on,
Thro' bending ranks of angels bright,
Until she stood before the throne,
There lost within God's light.

So passed she from my straining eyes;
And then I woke with sudden start,
Full of a sweet, tho' sad surprise,
And throbbings of the heart.

Alas! I woke to weary day,
To see her lying on the bed,
Where white, and calm, and still she lay,
One of the blessed dead.

But from my aching heart had gone
The bitter anguish and the pain;
I said, "O God, Thy will be done,
I ask her not again.

I would not, if I could, dear Lord,
Recall her to this world of woe;
Nor might I, could I speak the word,
Draw her from Thee below.

No! Let her live before Thy face,
And follow Thee thro' pastures fair;
Patient I'll tarry here a space,
Then seek her with Thee there."

THE SPRING.

WISH the spring were here;
I long to feel the fragrance of its breath
As, moving over hill, and mead, and mere,
It wakes young life from out the winter's death,—
I wish the spring were here,
To fill the woods with carols sweet and clear!

When will the winter go,
And chilling winds and rains pass all away?
The earth cast off her dreary shroud of snow,
And into green burst every branch and spray?
When will the winter go,
And loosened streams sing sweetly in their flow?

I long for balmy days,
Clear bright-eyed morns, and blue and glowing noons,
When with the buds the frolic zephyr plays,—
And purple nights lighted by mellow moons;

I long for balmy days,
And all delights that come with jocund Mays.

I sicken for fair flowers—
The silver snowdrop, and the violet sweet,
White lilies holding in their cups the showers,
And blooms that shine like stars around the feet;
I sicken for fair flowers,
For grassy plots, and the lush trellis'd bowers.

Green wonder of the spring,
Come, scatter beauties o'er the earth and sky,
Till every copse with merry music ring,
And soft low-piping winds come wandering by,—
Green wonder of the spring,
'Tis time thou should'st be born, and winter die!

"NOT UNCLOTHED, BUT CLOTHED UPON."

H, not unclothed, my heart recoils from this,
And turns all trembling from the loathsome grave!
But to be clothed upon, ah, this were bliss,
And this, O God, I crave!

I love this happy life and all its joys,
I love the sunshine, and the warmth, and light,—
The summer woods, the river's rippling voice,
And all things fair and bright.

I love the song of birds in leafy trees,
That sit and warble sweetly all the day;
I love to catch the whispers of the breeze
As through the boughs they play.

I love the bleat of lambs amongst the hills,
The hum upon the wind of passing bee;
To hear the lark which all the silence fills
With thrilling melody.

'Tis sweet to stray through fields where flow'rets blow,
Or wander thro' the meadows, cool and green,
To watch the shadows as they come and go
Across the starlight keen.

'Tis sweet to see affection's beaming look,
The smile of ready love, unbribed, unbought;
To read as in a fair and open book,
Each pure and holy thought.

I still would feel a wife's and child's embrace,
The clasp of friendly hand strong, staunch, and true;
And gaze into a loving, gentle face,
As now I fondly do.

I would not be unclothed; I would not die,
Wept for a space, perhaps, with bitter tear;
Then mouldering in the lonely grave, to lie
Forgotten, tho' so near;

Out in the cold, when warm fires burn and glow,
And happy faces gather round the hearth,
And peals of merry laughter come and go,
Whilst I lie deep in earth.

Oh, not unclothed! my God, save me, I pray,
From the dire sting and bitterness of death!
O come Thyself, and bring the Advent day,
Whilst yet I draw my breath!

Oh, not unclothed, but rather clothed upon,
With that immortal house Thou hast in store,
When the frail earthly tent is taken down,
And laid by evermore!

Oh, for the lot of that great Saint of old,
Who in the body went to be with Thee,
Rapt on a sudden to the heavenly fold,
From death set ever free!

Take me like him for whom the burning car
Swept down the firmament with splendour bright,
Gliding along the sky like some fair star,
And flashing on the sight.

But if this may not be, and die I must,—
If over me the solemn words be said,
"'Ashes to ashes, dust to kindred dust,"
Then, Lord, be with Thy dead!

Amen.

"I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY."

ONLY a little tired,—yes, that is all;
Only a little wearied,—nothing more;
I fain would turn my face unto the wall,
And catch the music from the other shore.

All that I long for is to be at rest,
For if I could, "I would not live alway;"
And so, with folded hands upon my breast,
I wait till God's own chimes ring in the day.

Nought wish I for, but just to fall asleep—
To close my weary eyes upon the light;
And tho' there's much that I might long to keep,
I yield all up, and gladly say, "Good night."

Not that my lot was shadowed by much pain,
Or bitter made by trouble or by tears;
I dare not venture, if I would complain,
Since joy and hope outbalanced grief and fears.

I think my life was happy on the whole,
Unnumbered mercies cheered my pilgrim way;
And as I now take counsel with my soul,
I see that sunshine gladdened many a day.

Blessings were thickly scattered on my road,
With countless gifts my brimming cup was full;
Sweet flowers sprang up around the path I trod,
Which I had only to stoop down and cull.

And I have dear ones whom I love full well,
Who lie close as it pulses to my heart;
No words of mine can ever justly tell
How of my life they made the dearer part.

Oh, never think, my own true faithful wife,
Or children, friends, your love I do not prize!
It, with a rainbow, spanned the clouds of life
And struck a chord of music from its sighs.

Grateful I am for all you richly gave
Of pure affection, and unselfish love;
It soothes me now as I draw near the grave,
'Twill be a memory in heaven above.

And if from heart that loves you, I confess
I long to leave this for the other shore,
It is not, dear ones, that I love you less,
'Tis only that I love my Saviour more.

Then do not wonder if I truly say,
Tho' looking o'er a past, serene and bright,
"I would not, if I could, live here alway,"
Or walk by faith, when I may walk by sight.

Nor pray, dear friends, to keep me longer here,
Your prayers may check the eager spirit's flight;
And do not, as ye love me, shed a tear,
'Tis only after all a short "good night."

Weep not for me—tired only—that is all,
Only a little wearied,—and no more;
"Good night,"—I turn my face unto the wall,
I hear the music from the other shore.

A DIRGE.

WHY sleepeth she? Are there not voices calling,
Bidding her to them as they used of yore,
In loving tones and sweetest accents falling
Along the sounding shore?

Why stayeth she? The starlight softly lieth—
The starlight which she loved on mead and hill;
While through the depths of heaven the white moon hieth,
And all is calm and still.

Why lingereth she? Her step once lightly bounded,
Brushing the dewdrop from the opening flower;
Her voice amidst the gay, all gayest sounded,
Rich in its youthful power.

Then say, why sleepeth she? She's gone for ever;
Oh, she is dead! our breaking hearts are sore;
We call her, but at our fond bidding, never
Shall she awaken more.

Alas! that she, who filled our home with gladness,
And made earth blessèd, should thus early die;
Turning our life in blank and dreary sadness,
Into one long-drawn sigh.

And yet, why murmur we? She has been taken
Far from the evil which is yet to come;
And not a tear can from her eyes be shaken
In her Elysian home.

There, with her Father in yon radiant heaven—
There, with her Saviour, pillow'd on His breast;
All gifts that God can give to her are given,
And peaceful is her rest.

Let us not weep, then, with a hopeless sorrow,
Nor cherish thoughts of an unmingled pain;
But rather wait the dawning of that morrow,
When we shall meet again,—

The glorious morn, when clothed in radiant lustre,
The saints that sleep in Christ to life shall rise,
And far outshine the brightest stars that cluster
Upon the sapphire skies.

LIFE OR DEATH.

THE people thro' the Churchyard go,
The Living thro' the Dead—
The Dead that sleep so calm below,
Each in his narrow bed.
The Living, full of hopes and fears,
The Dead, so quiet and so still;
The Living, weeping bitter tears;
The Dead, beyond the reach of ill.
The Living, needing cure and balm,
With weariness within their eyes;
The Dead, with faces all so calm,
Not vexed with sorrow or surprise;
Their lot removed from loss and pain,
And aching thoughts and throbbing brain.
Ah, which is best—to live and weep,
Or in the grave with Christ to sleep,
No scorn or wrong to wring the breast,
Or break the tranquil spirit's rest!

"IS IT WELL WITH THE CHILD?"

"Is it well with the child? It is well."

THREE dream-like years, and only three,
He blessed our home with love;
And then he passed away from earth,
To the home of God above.

He lay so very calm and still,
We did not know 'twas death;
And thought we heard, through parted lips,
The stirrings of his breath.

But when the truth flashed on our mind,
Our eyes grew dim with tears;
We had not whispered to ourselves
This close to all our fears.

Dear boy! he looked so sweet, so fair!
And round his forehead white,
Clustered the curls of golden hair,
Like an aureole of light.

We wept; we could not choose but weep,
So sore our hearts with pain;
And nature's bitter cry was this:
"Oh, give him back again!"

We did not think he could have died,
We hoped when hope was o'er;
We fondly thought the little life
Would be our life once more.

The world so empty seemed,—so blank
Without our darling one,
Who gave to life its grace and bloom,
And to our home its sun.

We never knew so well before
How much we loved the boy,—
How in our heart of hearts he lived
Our fondest hope, our joy.

We had not thought his gentle voice
So much had cheered our way,
Or that his eyes had been the light
Of our brief marriage-day.

We knew it then as he lay there,
We know it more and more;
We feel the world can never be
What it was to us before.

But all is well, our God is good,
This truth we both believe;
We sorrow not without a hope,
Not unconsoled we grieve.

God haply may have known that we
Had loved him all too well;
And so He took him from our arms,
To heaven with Him to dwell.

God may have seen his future lot,
All shadowed o'er with shame,
And kindly saved him from the world,
While pure and free from blame.

And so we say that "It is well,"
Through eyes with weeping dim;
For though he'll not return to us,
Yet we shall go to him.

THE LAW OF LOVE.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."—
GAL. vi. 2.

"BEAR ye one another's burdens,"
And fulfil Christ's law of love,
That divinest law which brought Him
From the spheres of light above.

"Bear ye one another's burdens,"
Take up something of the load;
Seek to cheer a fainting brother,
Help him kindly on the road.

Soothe the weary and the troubled,
As heart-sick they toil along;
Hush the bitter cry of sorrow,
Change its wailing to a song.

As ye pass yourselves to heaven,
Pause to bind some bleeding wound;
And with words of grace and mercy
Lift the fallen from the ground.

You can speak a word in season
In some sad and hopeless ear,
And revive the failing courage,
By inspiring hope for fear.

You can dry the tear of sorrow,
From the lids of weeping eyes;
You can ease the burdened spirit,
Draw forth music from its sighs.

You can watch the bed of sickness,
Take the fevered hand in thine;
Smooth the pillow, cheer the suffering,
With a cordial strong as wine.

You can bring a gleam of sunshine
To some poor and lonely home,
And be welcomed as an angel
When across the door you come.

You can check the hasty answer,
Press the word beneath your breath,
So as not to hurt a brother
With what pierces sharp as death.

You can share another's gladness,
With the weeping you can weep;
And if thus you sow in mercy,
You in mercy too shall reap.

Think of Him who came from Heaven,
Left God's bosom for the Cross;
Came in tears and nameless anguish,
To redeem us from our loss.

Not with light and glory came He,
Not with pomp, and song, and state;
Not to courtly hall or palace,
Not to mansions of the great.

Not a voice was raised in welcome,
No one hailed Him at His birth;
Every door was closed against Him,
When love drew Him down to earth.

Oh, what goodness! Oh, what mercy!
He our burdens came to bear;
Drank the cup of God's sore anger,
Left no drop for us to share.

Love of Christ, that law so noble,
Love so tender, so divine,
Law so Godlike, love so perfect;
Let that love be yours and mine.

Love of all laws is the greatest;'
"Love fulfils the law," Paul saith,—
Crowns her Queen of all the graces,
Thrones her 'bove both Hope and Faith.

Love is duty's full completeness,
Substance of all goodness, Love;
Love is true, and only meetness
For the saintly life above.

Then fulfil this law so Christlike;
Nought is higher, nought is more;
Love will last when time has perished;
Law of Heaven when earth is o'er.

THE WELL OF BETHLEHEM.

T was the golden harvest time,
The fields stood thick with corn;
The valleys blushed with clustered vines,
Purple and red as morn.
But though the vintage ripened stood,
And harvest fields were white,
No hand was placed amongst the grapes,
Nor flashed the sickle bright.

No song was heard from field or fold,
None echoed from the hill;
The plains were silent all as death,
As gloomy, voiceless, still.
The Philistine was in the land,
And kept it far and wide;
His armies seized fair Bethlehem,
And held it in their pride.

They roamed about in armèd bands,
And pillaged far and near,
And all the homes of Israel
Were dark with dread and fear.
They drove the oxen from the stall,
The cattle from the plain;
And in the fierce and furious fray,
Left many a brave man slain.

David to dark Adullam's cave,
With trumpet loud and clear,
Has called the true and gallant souls,
To whom the right is dear.
His troops he marshals for the fight,
Around the fastness hold;
His eye burns with the steady light
Of a courage high and bold.

No man fears he, no living thing,
He longs to take the field,
And burns to hear the clash and ring
Of broadsword and of shield.
He dares to stand against a host,
Like noble stag at bay;

The Philistine may brag and boast,
But not his soul dismay.

Now swings he high the battle-axe,
Now hurls the death-winged spear;
Then sweeping onward with his men,
Like rush of river through a glen,
Or tiger springing from his den,
Holds not his life as dear.
Many champions fall before him,
Many warriors bite the ground,
Heaps on heaps are piled the wounded,
And the dead are strewn around.

Grand he looked, and very stately,
Courage sits upon his brow;
Not a man that he encounters,
But before his feet doth bow.
And he bears himself right bravely,
Firm as any towering rock
'Gainst whose sides the waves of ocean
Dash and break with idle shock.

Loud and clear his voice is lifted,
Thrilling as a trumpet's tone—

"Strike for God, and strike for Jewry,
For your altars and the throne!"
Loudly then his men make answer,
Quick responding to his call;
And his words rouse thrilling echoes
In the breasts of each and all.

Throb their hearts with one high purpose,
And they firmly draw their breath,
Clench their teeth, and set their faces,
Ready for the fight with death.
Then as some wild torrent rushes
Down the wintry mountain's side,
Dash they with resistless onset,
In one strong impetuous tide.

Now they drive the foe before them,
Now they waver, now they stand;
Now they close in desperate struggle,
Foot to foot, and hand to hand.
Many knights, and many captains,
Go down in the bloody fray;
Many soldiers, stout and manly,
Close their eyes upon the day.

But at noon the battle slackened;
In the heaven the sun was high,
Pouring down his rays upon them
From a blazing, burning sky.
So there came a pause in fighting
All along the battle-field,
And each warrior loosed his helmet,
And unlaced his buckler-shield.

Then the weary soldiers stretch'd them
By the hill and rock and plain,
Waiting till the trumpet shrilling
Called them to the fight again.
And the king, himself exhausted,
Sank down fainting, sick with thirst:
Ah, to hear the waters trickle!
Ah! to see the fountains burst!

Rises now before his vision,
Bubbling up, a limpid pool;
Which, near Bethlehem's eastern portal,
Gushes clear, and sweet, and cool.
In this weary hour of languor,
Heart and brow afire with pain,

Yearns he with a passionate yearning,
Oh, to taste that well again!

Feels he all the sad, sick longing
As of one about to die,
And the fever of impatience
Takes shape in a troubled cry,—
"God, that one would give me water
From fair Bethlehem's sparkling well,—
Near the city's gate it lieth,
Where my fathers used to dwell!"

Then he paused, as speaking idly;
Knowing the fond wish was vain—
That the water, clear and limpid,
Might not cool his fevered brain.
For the foeman kept the city,
Garrison'd the eastern gate;
He who dared to force this outpost,
Must defy a bloody fate.

Still there passed before his vision
Pastures sweet, and deep, and green,
Where his father's flock he tended,
When a shepherd he had been.

And the sound of trickling streamlets
Fell like music on his ear;
Mocked his thirst so fierce and burning,
With fair dreams of water clear.

Now three mighty men of valour
Stood in waiting at his head;
Not one gallant man amongst them,
Knew a thought of craven dread.
Heard they David's feverish yearning,
Saw they, too, his longing glance;
And their bosoms burned within them,
And their hands grasped each his lance.

They to Bethlehem's gate will hasten,
And from out the bubbling pool
Bring their master, worn and weary,
Water fresh, and pure, and cool.
But can three, however gallant,
Break through hosts of armèd men?
Matched against such fearful numbers,
Shall they e'er return again?

Haste they surely to destruction,
These three noble hearts and brave;

Quickly vanquished, they will measure
Each a stark and bloody grave.
How they dash on, like a whirlwind
Speeding o'er the level plain!
See, their path is marked by tumult,
Cries of wounded, groans of slain!

Brave Adino slew his hundreds,
Spear and sword were dyed in blood;
Hip and thigh bold Shammah smote them,
Not a man against him stood.
Eleazar's hand was weary,
Left he there so many slain;
Falling as the ripe corn falleth,
When the sickle shears the grain.

Press'd they onwards to the city,
Near where Bethlehem's fountain springs;
And with blare and flare of trumpets,
Hill and valley shrilly rings.
Stooping down, then each man quickly
Takes the helmet from his brow;
Dips the casque, all large and hollow,
In the cooling water's flow.

Then they fill the brimming helmet,
Not one drop they dare to taste;
Well they know, that not a moment
Have they now to lose or waste.
So they speed across the valley
Where they left their hundreds slain,
Pausing never till the fastness
And their chief is reached again.

'Gainst their march no hand is lifted,
Not a man grasps sword or spear;
All fall back before the warriors,
Held fast in a coward fear.
But by all their gods they curse them,
Cursing low with bated breath;
Whilst upon their brows sits scowling,
Hate as grim and black as death.

David through the hours is conscious
Of the risk the three had dared;
And, with tremblings for their safety,
Prays to God their lives be spared.
Would that he had stilled the longing,
Sought his passionate wish to tame!

And his face it glows like scarlet,
With a blush that owns his shame.

What if these brave men should perish,
Fall o'erpowered by the foe?
Can he e'er forget the rashness
That has wrought so dire a woe?
As the king is rapt in silence,
Rings a cry throughout the tent—
Thrilling cry of men who conquer;
And with shouts the air is rent.

'Tis the welcome of the soldiers,
As the chiefs return again;
All their armour stained and gory,
From the life-blood of the slain.
Then the three approach their chieftain,
At his feet themselves they fling;
And again the shouting thousands
Make the sounding welkin ring.

In his hand they place the helmet,
Brimming with the waters cool,
Which, risking life in the deadly strife,
They bring from Bethlehem's sparkling pool.

What! and will not David taste them?
What! not quench his burning thirst?
No! his heart grows hot within him,
And it swells as though 'twould burst.

Silently he takes the helmet,
Reverently looks up to God;
And the casque he turneth downward,
Pours the stream upon the sod.
For though burning thirst consumes him,
And the fever fills each vein,
Yet the water, fresh and cooling,
Only wrings his heart with pain.

For with blood it seems all crimson'd—
Blood, of those three mighty men,
Who to satisfy his yearning,
Stormed the foeman in his den.
So he pours the dear-won water
Out upon the grassy sward,
Offering there a pure libation
To the honour of the Lord.

"Far, Lord, be such a thing from me,
To drink so dearly won a draught;

Base and unworthy it would be;
'Twould seem as though hot blood I quaffed,—
For is not this the very life
Of those who in the deadly strife
Put all held dear in jeopardy—
Their wives, their homes, their liberty?
Forbid it, Lord, in Thy good grace,
That I should do a thing so base!"

Then he turned to thank the captains
Who had braved so much for him—
Men who, at his lightest wishes,
Dared to face the battle grim.
And to each he gave a station,
Nearest, closest to his throne:
That they well deserve such guerdon,
All the nation freely own.

Into song their names are woven,
At their deeds men kindle still;
And the strong man waxes stronger,
Both in purpose and in will.
In the Book their names are written,
Ranked they are with all the brave,

Fame eternal is their portion ;
Dead, they speak from out their grave.

David, too, is held in honour—
Honour greater than before ;
For his chivalrous demeanour,
In men's eyes a grandeur bore.
And they praised him, deemed him worthy
Of all homage and renown ;
Longed to give him their allegiance,
On his head to see the crown.

For they felt that one so noble
Would the kingdom well command ;
He would wield the sceptre justly,
Over Judah's vine-clad land.
They who rule their own proud spirits,
Keep their hasty passions down,
Greater are than who win battles,
Or who take the fortress'd town.

LIFE.

THE shuttle flashing quickly thro' the loom,
The shadow of a cloud upon the hills,
The flowers that perish almost ere they bloom,
The sparkle and the gleam on summer rills,
The lightning, flame-like, leaping thro' the gloom,
The foaming cataract which rainbows span,
The falcon, poising in its airy flight,
The sudden darkness of a southern night,—
All these are emblems of the life of man.

DEATH.

THE shadows lengthening on the level lea,
The darkness gathering round the closing day,
The sun that setting sinks into the sea,
The workman wending homewards on his way,
The birds that sit all mute upon the tree,
Sere leaves that shrivel 'neath the wind's sharp breath,
The stillness of a world fast locked in sleep,
When not a murmur breaks the silence deep,—
All these are Nature's parables of Death.

THE DREAM OF PILATE'S WIFE.

WITH a sharp cry of pain she left her couch,
And, when her white foot touched the marble floor,
Stood, with dilated eye and burning cheek,
And hair that all unbound flowed darkly down,
Pale, scared, and still. One small hand pressed her brow;
The other, clenched so tightly that the nails
Pierced the pink palm, fell stiffly at her side.
A moment thus she stood like statue carved
In marble: rigid, hardened into stone,—
Blanched as the surf upon the wild sea-shore,
When the waves break in foam upon the rocks.
Then, in a broken voice that shook with fear,
She called her trembling maidens to her side.
They flocked around her, like a flock of doves
When fluttered by a hawk seen in the blue.
From many chambers they came running all,

And gathered near her with a sudden dread
That shook the ruddy colour from their cheeks.
She tried to speak, and could not, for no voice
Would follow at her bidding: the deep storm
Of passion choked it in the swelling throat.
With one great effort she grew calm; and now
Her words, clear and distinct, thrilled on the ear,
And held the listeners spell-bound with their thrall.
"Oh, maidens, such a night! oh, such a dream!"
Trembling, she paused, then hurriedly went on:—
"Oh, tell me; said they not, that late last night
Jesus, the Man of Nazareth, whose fame
Has filled all ears, by one of His own friends
Betrayed, was by our soldiers ta'en, and led
To Pilate's judgment-hall, for that He made
Himself a King, opposing Cæsar's claims?
Some say this Jewish people sought His death
Because He spake some blasphemy against
Their God. I know not this. I saw Him once,—
A mien of mournful majesty, a face
All marred, yet noble, and alight with love.
He moved along attended by a crowd
Of poor, diseased, and sick,—a piteous throng
Who came for healing, and for blessing too,

And found them both. Some of His words
Have been to me repeated, and they fell
Upon mine ears more musical than song:
Of 'rest' they were,—rest to the weary,—rest
To laden ones, the sinful and the sad.
Say, maidens, is't not so?"
With wondering voice
They murmured in awe-stricken tones and low,
"Yea, Lady; yea!"
In passionate words she spake:
"Pilate did send me word he was to sit
Upon the judgment-seat to-day, and hear this cause.
A nameless horror chills me to the heart
As I forebode the sentence he may give;
For much he holds this people in contempt,
And laughs to scorn the customs of their law;
And if this Jewish Teacher hath said aught
Against great Cæsar's rights,—which I, for one,
Believe not, for His eye had that far glance
Which said His heart was with the gods,—not here,—
But if His claims should seem to clash with Cæsar's,
Alas, I know that Pilate would condemn!"
Her maidens answered: "Yea, he would condemn;
For he is loyal to the world's great lord."

"But listen, maidens, whilst I tell my dream.
Methought a street, filled with a savage crowd,
Whose shouts and curses jarred upon the ear
As they did toss from angry lip to lip
One hated name, and gnashed and ground their teeth,
And yelled, 'Away with Him! Away with Him!
He is not fit to live,' they cried,—'Not fit to live!'
And shrieked out, 'Crucify Him! Crucify Him!'
And women's voices mingled with the hoarse
Deep bass of men, and cried in piercing tones,—
'On us, and on our children, be His blood!'
I looked to see the object of their hate,—
Who He could be that all men joined to scorn.
Now swayed the surging crowd, and all at once
It opened, and I saw there in the midst
A face all pale and wan, beneath a brow
Crowned with a circlet of Acanthus thorns.
It might have melted hearts of hardest stone
To see this man, Jesus the Nazarene,
Weak, faint, and worn, stooping beneath a cross
Which pressed His shoulders; yet with such a look,—
A look so calm in its sublime despair.
If gods could suffer, He might be a god
Come down in shape and form of mortal men.

Yet no one pitied Him, and no one blessed.
Still rang the streets with that fierce bitter cry,—
'Away with Him! away with Him to death!'
I tried to speak: no words would come;
They died upon my lips in muffled sounds.
But e'en as though the prayer that on my tongue
Battled for utterance had been shrieked aloud
And pierced His ears, to me He turned His face
With such a glance, so sad, yet so divine,
That gathering up my strength, methought I tried
To rush into the maddened crowd, and kneeling,
Plead for sweet pity's sake. I could not stir;
Limbs, feet, were rooted to the spot! Then came
A voice,—His voice,—came thrilling on my ear,
Shaking my heart with terror as I heard
One word—one name. 'Twas 'Pilate!' and no more.
A thousand echoes caught the word, and all
The babbling air repeated, 'Pilate! Pilate!'
Methought I swooned in horror; and it passed,—
That fearful vision,—to the darkness whence
It came to fill me with a nameless dread."

She wept. She bowed her head, and wept hot tears
That welled up from a heart was like to break,
And all the woman shook as she would die.

Her maidens, awed, aghast, stood weeping, too,
In broken words trying to soothe her grief.
But all in vain. And now once more she spake,
Lifting a face distained and wet with tears.
"So for a time; and then from out my sleep
Came divers shapes and forms, all indistinct
And vague. Then other images grew clear
Before my sight, up from the darkness drawn,
Until I saw what I shall bear to death,
So stampt is it upon my burning brain,
A memory to carry to the grave!"
She paused: she pressed her brow, as she would beat
Some anguish back; her eye the while ablaze
With a strange burning fire; and then again
In tones so piteous, low, and full of pain,
It seemed a wail from out a broken heart,
She poured her dream into her damsels' ear.
"Methought a surging crowd, a burning sky,
A little hill outside the city walls,
And on the hill three crosses planted close,
On these, nailed to the wood, three dying men.
But one alone,—the central cross,—drew heart
And eye, absorbing every thought; for here
He hung,—the Man of Sorrows, whom I saw

Hurried to death along the city's streets.
All white His face with agony, and stained
With blood that flowed in big and crimson drops
From the sharp crown was twisted round His brow.
The cruel nails had pierced the hands and feet,
And fixed them to the tree: and oh, the look
Of woe that filled those sad, pathetic eyes!
Men mocked Him as He hung there,—laughed and jeered:
'Come down, come down,' they cried, 'and save Thyself
An' if thou be God's Son!' And when there wailed
Upon the ear a piteous cry, 'I thirst!'
They gave Him gall and vinegar to drink;
And flung into His dying face fierce oaths,
And cruel curses, and rude jests and jeers.
But He—He heeded not,—spoke not—was dumb.
Perhaps He heard not, for His thoughts seemed far
Away, as if they were in heaven with God.
And as I looked, longing to speak to Him
Of comfort, and to wipe from off His brow
The death-sweat,—say one heart there was that felt
For Him,—one that would save Him if she could,
But had no power; no power!—His eyes met mine,
And in that piteous face I saw the look

That I had seen across it pass before;
And all my soul grew faint and sick with fear.
Into that moment passed whole years of pain!
Then, as I looked, my heart all in my eyes,
There fell a sudden darkness on the world,
Blotting the sun out,—spreading o'er the skies,
Veiling the Sufferer in its night-black pall,—
Stilling the murmurs round the blood-stained cross.
And now the hush of death lay on the land:
A silent horror settled down on men!
As though the world stood still in its great course,
And Nature's pulses came to sudden pause.
Wondering I stood,—scarce breathing, filled with fear,
Dreading what next might follow, what befall;
When from the darkness rose a cry so dread,
So full of anguish, that it seemed to tear
The tortured heart, and rend it into twain.
Then a dire tremor shook the earth, the rocks:
'Twas cry of one forsaken of His God,—
A bitter cry that thrilling wailed to heaven.
And with that cry, to me, all shuddering,
There came another word—a name,—spoken
This time by whom I knew not, but as sharp
As knife that draws the blood. The word was 'Pilate!'

And once again a thousand echoes caught
The name, and all the sounding air was filled
With shrilling voices, crying, 'Pilate! Pilate!'
Methought I caught it up, and shrieked it out
As one who had no power of self-control.
I woke, and on my lips was 'Pilate' still.
And then I started from my bed, and called
You maidens all, to help me in this hour,
Whose fellow I have never known, and pray
The gods that I may never know again.
Help! what help can ye give? What help? what help?
What means this dream? Is it a warning giv'n
By Powers that wait on good? What should I do?
Am I to stand 'twixt Jesus and His doom?
Am I to save my husband from the guilt
That would condemn the innocent and just?
It must be so! Yes: Pilate must be warned,—
Aye, were he sitting on the judgment-seat,—
Not to give up this man unto the will
Of His fierce enemies, nor listen, no!
To clamours of this Jewish mob for blood.
Pilate, no matter what the cost, the right
Must do for once, and let the expedient go!
Haste ye, dear maids, and send to him with speed

A messenger, quick-footed, trusty, sure,
And rapid as the wind. Tell him to bear
This message to my lord without delay:
'See thou have nought to do with that just Man,
For I, thy wife, this day in fearful dreams
Have suffered many things because of Him.'"
Frighted and pale, the maidens, trembling, flew
To give the message to a faithful slave
That waited near. Without delay he sped;
Fleet as the flash that lights up all the sky
When thunder crashes from the blackening cloud,
So sped the slave to Pilate where he sat
In judgment on the Man of Nazareth;
To warn him not to harm the just, or think
That water could wash blood from guilty hands.
And she—the wife—all faint and white, sank prone
Upon her silken couch; with sickening fears,
And beatings of the heart that shook her frame,
To wait in agony the dreaded end.

NAOMI.

TWO sad-faced women, haggard, worn, and wan,
Passed wearily thro' Bethlehem's sun-scorched street;
The city, moved to pity, round them ran,
And some with wondering cry the strangers greet,
"What! Is this Naomi?" She quickly broke
Upon them trembling, as they thus began,—
"Call me not Naomi," she weeping spoke,
"For Naomi is numbered with the dead;
My name is Mara, for, O friends, with me
The Lord hath dealt exceeding bitterly!

"The hand of God has touched me, and I mourn,
Has robbed me both of husband and of son,
Woe worth the bitter day that I was born!
My prop, my stay, my life of life is gone;
I went out full, empty come back to you,
A widow, childless, desolate, forlorn.

The graves in Moab hold my dead heart too,
I left it with them where they sleep in peace.
So from my years has gone the sun, the light,
I grope as one thro' some dark dreary night."

LIGHT AT EVENTIDE.

"At evening-time there shall be light."—ZECH. xiv. 7.

WORDS of hope! they fall upon the ear
Like holy music floating from a Psalm,
Sweet as are far-off bells that ring out clear,
Healing as was of old fair Gilead's balm.
What can the unknown future be but bright,
If thus, "At evening-time there shall be light."

I feared the morrow, what the coming years,
Of trouble on my lonely life might shed,
And how the end might come, with peace or tears,
Yea, coward-like, I shrank with nameless dread
From what the day might bring, from what the night.
Oh shame! "At evening-time there shall be light."

For late in gloom and mist had lain my way,
Through gathering storms, and wildly driving rain,
And clouds had darkened o'er my happy day,
And I had trembled with foreboding pain,

Fearing to face what must and would be right,
Since thus, "At evening-time there shall be light."

O faithless heart! What fearest thou? Be still,
The future is with Him who guides thy way,
Whose promises with peace thy soul should fill,—
"According to thy strength shall be thy day."
Then walk by faith, soon shalt thou walk by sight,
Fear not: "At evening-time there shall be light."

I do believe, O Father! Saviour! God!
Though troubled oft, I will not be distrest;
Nor will I faint, but boldly face the road,
And on Thy love my weary head shall rest;
Thy Word each fear and care shall put to flight,
I know "At evening-time there shall be light."

The sun that often struggles all the day,
With clouds that darken o'er the dull grey sky,
At setting poureth forth a golden ray,
And floods the heavens with glory far and nigh,
So all my fears shall vanish—hope be bright,
And at my "evening-time there shall be light."

NIGHT AND MORNING.

"Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night."—Isa. xxi. 11, 12.

" ATCHMAN, what of the night?" he cries,
Who, stretched on a bed of pain,
Worn, and weary, and restless lies,
With fevered heart and brain.
"When will the dreary hours go past?
Oh, when will the night be gone?
Would God that the morning might come at last!
Would God the day might dawn!"
The Watchman says—"No signs as yet of day are in the sky,
But morning comes; a little while, and the darkness passeth by."

"Watchman, what of the night?" he sighs,
Who, sick with a hope deferred,
Looks eagerly up through weeping eyes,
To catch the Watchman's word.

"When will it come, the joyous day,
And bring with it peace and rest?
When will the darkness speed away,
And light return to the breast?"
The Watchman says—"Night lingers still, but soon the morn shall dawn.
Be patient yet, and hope in God, for the daybreak hasteneth on."

"Watchman, what of the night?" he moans,
Who, pierced with a rankling dart,
Wails for his sin with weeping and groans,
And the cry of one sick at heart.
"Is there no medicine to heal the soul?
No balm that will give it peace?
No charm that can charm away its dole?
And bid the sharp anguish cease?"
The Watchman says—"Weep on, weep on; such sorrows healing bring.
God loves to see such holy tears; thou yet shalt laugh and sing."

"Watchman, what of the night?" he cries,
Who, in the long ages of woe,

Sees the shadows ever gather and rise,
And knows they never shall go.
"What of the night?" is his cry of pain,
As he looks through the coming years,
Looking for comfort, but all in vain!
For nothing shall staunch his tears.
The Watchman says—"No ray of light shall ever reach thy soul,
But ever and ever shall deepen the night, and its shadows round thee roll."

"Watchman, what of the night?" he says,
Who longs for his Lord's return,
Waiting until the Day of Days
On the mountain-tops shall burn.
"Oh, say when on my yearning sight
The Day Star shall arise,
And banish away the gloom of night
With splendours of Paradise?"
The Watchman says—"The morning comes, the hills are all aglow;
Prepare, prepare thy Bridal Song, for soon the darkness will go."

GOD'S FURNACE.

"I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction."—Isa. xlviii. 10.

MY God a Furnace hath of fire,
Its chambers all with flame aglow,
'Tis fann'd in love, and not in ire,
And on the coals He oft doth blow;
A Furnace kindled with His breath,
Cruel, and keen, and sharp as death.

Why doth He thus His fires prepare,
And fan them till they fiercely burn,
To scathe us with their angry glare,
Whichever way we move or turn?
That He may plunge His people in,
And cleanse them throughly from their sin.

He treats us as the goldsmith treats
The ruddy gold he prizeth well,

Who makes it pass thro' savage heats,
And melts it in his crucible;
And this he does because he knows
'Tis destined for a monarch's brows.

God's fires burn up the seeds of ill
Which lurk within the secret heart;
God's fires melt down the hardest will,
And sever dross and gold apart;
Thro' all the spirit's depths they run,
Until their cleansing work is done.

Oft at white heat the furnace stands,
Ready the evil to consume,
To shrivel up sin's strongest bands,
With fires as fierce as those of doom;
For some He heats it seven times more
Than He has heated it before.

But in the furnace fires so keen,
God doth not leave us all alone,
And tho' His presence is not seen,
There walks beside us His dear Son,

Who comforts us and doth sustain,
And takes from suffering half its pain.

And when His fires have wrought their aim,
And sullen hardness all is gone,
God takes us from the burning flame,
To place us on His Anvil stone,
And there with patience wondrous kind,
He moulds and shapes us to His mind.

We shrink indeed from all the pain,
The furnace blast, the hammer's blow,
We pray to 'scape them, but in vain,
For God knows well it must be so;
That if we would be clean and pure,
The searching flame we must endure.

We need the frequent hammer's stroke,
One blow doth not accomplish all,
It is not thus our hearts are broke,
Oft and again the sledge must fall;
And 'tis our fault that we require
God's Anvil, and God's Furnace fire.

But let us thank Him for the pain
  That separates the gold from dross,
That purges us from soil and stain,
  E'en tho' it be at our sore loss;
Why should we quail, when God desires
To make us perfect thro' His fires?

HEART-BREATHINGS.

H for a harp of heaven's own gold!
Oh for a well-strung perfect lyre!
That I God's mercies manifold
Might celebrate as I desire;
As they who stand
With palms in hand,
Upon the glassy sea of fire.

Oh for the tongue of those who bow
Within the shadow of the throne;
Who take the crowns from off their brow,
Before His feet to cast them down!
That I might raise
Eternal praise
To God Jehovah, Three in One.

Oh for an angel's power of flight!
A seraph's burning heart of love!

To serve God ever day and night,
To serve Him as the ages move,
And to fulfil
His holy will,
As saints do in the courts above.

I pant, I thirst, I yearn for this,
I would be pure and free from blame;
It were to me the highest bliss
To rise beyond guilt, fear, and shame;
To have within
No taint of sin,
Purged throughly in the cleansing flame.

But if such bliss cannot be here,
And holiest deeds must wear a stain,
Oh! let me in Thy courts appear,
Where purity alone doth reign.
And evermore,
On that blest shore,
I shall be free from such a pain.

Oh! draw me upward to Thy feet;
Oh! bathe me in the wells of light;

Oh! make me perfect, pure, complete;
Oh! turn my faith at once to sight.
And let me be,
My God, with Thee,
All clothed in garments clean and white;

Close to the mystic tree of life,
Where spread its branches green and calm,
Whose boughs with fruitage all are rife
Whose leaves are fraught with healing balm,
I fain would raise,
My voice in praise,
And lift up an eternal psalm.

HEART-STRUGGLES.

I KNOW I must be patient, so I try
To say, His holy will, not mine, be done!
But if in mercy I might only die,
And hide away in darkness from the sun,
Which hurts me with its hot and garish light,
I should be happy; for I do but sigh
To bid the world a long and last good-night
Before another morrow hath begun;
To front the sad and woeful coming years,
'Tis this unseals the fountain of my tears.

'Tis this I feel so hard—so hard to bear,
To die were easy, yea, to die were gain;
To walk the valley, with His presence near,
This were no bitterness—'twere bliss, not pain.
Smiling I'd creep into my lowly bed,
And say to all, "Farewell," without a tear.

But to live on, when dearest hopes are dead,
To gather up life's broken threads again,
When Death on Love, with cruel foot hath trod,
This, this is bitter, O my God, my God!

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

DEAD.

"My son, my son!"

EAD: turn'd at once into clay!
Dead: he that drew life from my breast;
Whom I clasp'd to my heart yesterday,
And close to its pulses had press'd!
Dead: and his face ashen grey!
Dead: the wild spirit at rest!
My son, my son!

Dead: but not shot thro' the heart
In battle 'gainst wrong for the right,—
'Twere noble from life thus to part,
And fall slain in a chivalrous fight;
But to think *how* he died is the smart,
A darkness unbroken by light!
My son, my son!

Hadst thou died in a cause that was good,
Standing up for the right and the true,
Thy mother had said,—ay, she *would*,—
Let death make a gap 'twixt us two:
I swear, by the cross and the rood,
Without tears I had bade thee adieu!
My son, my son!

Dead: stricken down by a blow
Dealt out by a passionate hand;
In the wink of an eyelid laid low,
His blood welling out on the sand,
And crawling, all red in its flow,
Till it crept to my feet where I stand!
My son, my son!

Dead: kill'd in a wild, drunken brawl,—
Ah, *here* is the sting and the shame!
Ah, here is the wormwood and gall!
This burns in my bosom like flame!
Would that tears had dropp'd on my pall,
Ere this blot had blacken'd his name.
My son, my son!

Thus to die with a wine-madden'd brain,
Besotted, befool'd, and beguiled!
I curse, from the heart of my pain,
In words that sound frantic and wild;
I curse,—but my curses are vain;
They cannot restore me my child.
My son, my son!

Yet my grief is but common, they say,
Others feel the same anguish and woe;
Sad mothers and wives face the day,
And their eyes with hot tears overflow,
As weeping they pass on their way,
And cursing the wine as they go.
My son, my son!

I tell you in God's holy name,
That *this* is the scourge of the land,
Its burden, its sorrow, its shame,
Burnt deep on its brow like a brand;
Striking hard at its honour and fame,
And crumbling its strength into sand.
My son, my son!

We mothers and wives, lift the cry,
And pray ye, O men, for your grace:
Come, help from your stations on high,
As ye hope to look God in the face,
Who sees us, as weeping we lie,
And ask you for ruth from your place!
My son, my son!

O poets, *your* aid we implore:
Chant no longer the praises of wine;
Dash the wine-cup down on the floor,
You dishonour a craft so divine!
Ah, indeed, you would praise it no more,
If your son lay dead there, like mine!
My son, my son!

O singers, well-skill'd in the song,
Who stir the sweet air with your breath
As your voices move thrilling along,
Dare you laud the cup that is death?
Dare ye lend your great gifts to such wrong?
If so, from your brows tear the wreath!
My son, my son!

Hear the cry from madhouse and jail,
The moan of the starving and poor,
Hear the widows' and orphans' sharp wail,
Who, like martyrs that groan and endure,
Lift to God their white faces so pale,
And, though speechless, His pity adjure.
My son, my son!

Help all! Free the slaves from their bands,
Help, and take part in this fight;
Strike the fetters from paralysed hands!
Like Samson, rise up in your might,
Break the chains like green willow-wands:
Do this in God's name, and the right!
My son, my son!

Oh, scorn not, I pray you, the cry
Of a mother, a widow undone;
But even tho' *you* pass it by,
It will move the great God on His throne:
He hears from the dust where I lie,
Where in ashes I weep for my son.
My son, my son!

LOST!

LOST! Lost! Yes, I tear up the word
From a heart that bleeds at the core;
It gashes and wounds like a sword,
And opens a festering sore.
At my soul a deep trouble is stirr'd,
To be soothed, to be healed, nevermore.
Lost!

Yet the sun shineth on just the same,
It smiles on a world that goes ill;
It looks on at the sin and the shame,
At the crimes that men do at their will,
And tho' it might wrap them in flame,
It rises and sets on them still.
Lost!

Thou a man! His likeness I know
Thou dost carry, dost boast a man's power;

"The head of the woman!"—Just so,
And gifted with strength for thy dower.
Well, man! thou art fallen so low,
I, a woman, spurn thee this hour.
Lost!

Speak and say, is there not damning wrong
In using your gifts to betray?
You, *you* in your manhood so strong,
We so weak that we trust what you say;
You treat us just like an old song,
To be used, and then flung away.
Lost!

Say what sin is so devilish as this?
To drag down a soul to the dust,
Like Judas, betray with a kiss;
All for what? For a fancy? a lust?
And thus, with the serpent's cold hiss,
To repay too confiding a trust.
Lost!

Thou didst lie on a woman's pure breast,
Who gave thee thy life by her pain,

Her lullaby sung thee to rest,
  On thy lips fell her kisses like rain.
By the heart to which thou wast prest,
  Fear'd thou not woman's love to profane?
    Lost!

Thy mother! Ah, yes, grasp the thought!
  Give it place in thy mind—hold it there;
Think! Her womanhood all-set at nought,
  Thou a woman to injure didst dare.
That motherhood dropt and forgot,
  Thou didst hurt the same nature she bare.
    Lost!

But what is our anguish to you?
  The world will condone, aye, it will;—
Will flatter and fawn, this is true,
  And smile down all thought of the ill;
Perhaps for your friendship will sue,
  And with greetings will welcome you still.
    Lost!

'Tis the part of a coward to lie,
  Tho' *thou* think'st it little, forsooth!

Thou forgettest there lives in yon sky
A God full of justice and ruth.
And what wilt thou say in reply,
When thou stand'st to be judged by His truth?
Lost!

Ah, that God did hear thy false vow,
To give her thy hand and thy name!
Thó', dastard, thou shrink'st from it now,
And art dead to all feelings of shame.
Let the brand of a Cain mark thy brow,
And burn in thy heart like a flame.
Lost!

Ah! where is she now? Canst thou tell?
She thou didst lure by thy love?
Love! Aye, thou didst love her as well
As the ravenous vulture the dove.
Where? On the streets? or in hell?
Answer Him who judgeth above.
Lost!

See! She creeps to the black river-side,
Where the waters flow silently on,

Her guilt and her anguish to hide
From the light and the sight of the sun;
To be borne to God's Bar on the tide,
There to stand all despairing, undone.
Lost!

Had I seen her swathed in her shroud,
Stiff and cold, with a face wan and white,
I had wept, but not clamoured aloud;
And, tho' from my home gone the light,
My heart and my head I had bowed,
And said, thro' my tears, "All is right."
Lost!

O great God! how long wilt Thou brook
Earth's vices, her wrongs and her shame?
O just God! how long wilt Thou look
On the sins that are done 'gainst Thy name?
It is time 'neath Thy wrath the world shook;
Why flash not Thy lightnings in flame?
Lost!

But no more. This only I say:
With the stain of such guilt on Thy soul,

Man! what wilt thou do in the day
When God's thunders shall over thee roll,
And thou shrink'st self-condemned in dismay,
And thy lies shrivel up like a scroll?
Lost!

Ah, yes, thou shalt meet with her there!
And God's justice those lips shall compel
The truth, the whole truth, to declare,
And confess thro' thy falsehood she fell.
In HER eyes thou shalt read thy despair,
From HER tongue hear thy sentence of hell.
Lost!

LIONEL AND MARGARET.

PART I.

T is the golden summer time,
And looks the earth as in its prime,
When beauty glowed in Eden's bowers,
And sparkled in its blushing flowers;
When all things wore the radiant dye,
The hue of immortality.
Fair and pleasant is the scene:
A sloping lawn of tender green
Is set amidst a ring of trees,
Whose leaves attract the honey-bees,
And move beneath a gentle breeze.
Southward there gleams a tranquil lake,
Where, in a thousand ripples, break
The waves that shine like diamonds bright
In the fair morning's tender light.
Amidst bright flowers a fountain plays,
Which leaps to meet the sun's bright rays;

And then falls back with cooling sound,
Scattering bright rainbow showers around.
Upon this fair and fragrant lawn,
In youth's first flush and rosy dawn,
A merry group of children play,
And with their sport beguile the day;
Such children as to us are given,
As if to say—"Of such is heaven."
Some chase, with lightsome step and spring,
The butterfly's enamelled wing;
Some gather flow'rets fresh and fair,
And twine them in their wavy hair,
Or to their voices' music sweet,
In graceful dance advance, retreat;
And ever comes upon the ear,
Sweet joyous shouts and laughter clear,
Wild bursts of uncontrollèd glee,
And innocent glad revelry.
But two, away from all the throng,
Nor heed the dance, nor list the song,
A boy and girl, in life's first pride,
Sit near each other, side by side.
Of different beauty, though both fair,
He with dark eyes, and raven hair;

Her tresses sunny, and her eye
Steeped in the heaven's azure dye.
As two flowers growing from one stem,
Whose dewy petals meet and twine,
As two gems in a diadem
With the one lustre flash and shine,
So these two children, sweet and young
As any minstrel ever sung,
Are of the other each a part,
One in hope, and one in heart.
Here, in the rosy summer light,
In childhood's morning, glad and bright,
With the roses blooming near,
In the noontide of the year,
Without a shadow in their eyes,
Joyous 'neath the cloudless skies,
They have come from all the others,
Friends and sisters, fathers, brothers ;
And soft and low their words of love,
As that of bird in the trees above.
He o'er her lithe young form doth bow,
And twines a garland for her brow ;
She, with a sweet and artless smile,
Looks up into his eyes the while,

And glows her cheek with childish pride,
As he softly calls her "his own bride."
O happy days, all fair and bright!
O world, all clad in tender light!
O radiant hours, must ye then pass
Like shadows flitting o'er the grass?
And now the delicate feast is laid
Beneath the beeches in the shade,
And here glow ripe and mellow fruits,
With dulcet creams, and juicy roots;
Red grapes and amber from the vine,
That like to lustrous jewels shine;
Cool water from the well, and wine,
Warm peaches, purple plums, and luscious dates,
And snow-white bread, and dainty cates;
All that could please these children fair,
Was placed in plenteous bounty there.
So passed the happy hours away,
Until in beauty closed the day.
The sun in splendour rich and bright,
His bed a couch of rosy light,
Sank slowly to his evening rest,
Flooding with glory all the west.

Then sounded from the old church tower
The curfew-bell, tolling the parting hour;
Its solemn chime falling upon the ear,
Now loud and high, now deep, sonorous, clear.
Then came the pleasant eventide,
And all the heavens, far and wide,
Were filled with stars, which gleamed and shone
Around the white moon on her throne.
The flowers had long since closed their eyes,
White lily, and the crimson rose;
Striped pinks, carnations red as blood,
Pale lavender and southernwood;
But still they send forth fragrant sighs,
And all their sweetness they disclose.
The birds are silent in the trees,
Nor is there heard the whisper of a breeze.
Only one bird prolongs her note,
And she, the clear-voiced nightingale,
Fills with a song the verdurous dale,
Which, gushing from her swelling throat,
A hurried and a passionate strain,
Echo, awake, repeats again
In modulated love and pain.

And when the happy birds and bees
Flew to their homes in hives and trees,
And dewy flow'rs, as the last light fled,
Folded their leaves, and droop'd their head,
The children sought each mother's breast,
And wearied lay in balmy rest.
They parted all, and calm came down,
A benediction like a crown
Resting in blessing on each brow
That slept in dreamless slumber now.
But who may say what after-fate
These joyous little ones await?
Oh, who may tell if bliss or woe
Shall be their portion here below?
Shout! shout! make echo ring again
With your wild, mirthful glee;
Your brows are yet undimmed by pain,
Your hearts from care are free.
Shout! shout and laugh! for coming years
May turn your mirth and joy to tears.
Then visions of these youthful days,
And of this sunlit green,
Will flit across your weary gaze;
And joys that once had been,

Into new life shall rush, and start,
Will pierce the brain, and wring the heart,
Will bring fresh tears, and bitter sorrows,
Thoughts of sweet yesterdays, and sad to-morrows;
And you will feel that years of pain
Would cheaply purchase hours of youth again.

PART II.

Time passed; they came and went, the months and years,
And brought their changes as they hurried by;
To some they bore sad thoughts and bitter tears,
Regrets and memories that raised a sigh;
To others rest and pleasures sweet and deep,
Bright days of joy, and nights of peaceful sleep.

And what of those who met in that bright scene,
When summer flushed the sky with tender light,
And hills and valleys clothed themselves in green,
And the whole earth looked fresh, and pure, and bright,
And if a shadow fell across the way,
It shed a softened lustre on the day?

Ah, what of them, the young, the gay, the free,
Who played together on the emerald grass,
And laughed and danced in merry childish glee,
And chased the shadows as they saw them pass,

And shouted to the echoes, which again
Replied to them in sweet and mocking strain!

Their fates are various: some on foreign shore
Their fortunes seek, and some upon the main;
Some toil amid the city's deaf'ning roar,
With weary hand, and sweat of brow and brain;
Some burn the midnight oil, and some are wed;
And others sleep amongst the quiet dead.

And the fair Girl and Boy, who in their youth
Were lovers, and whose souls were early knit
To one another with firm strength and truth,
For whom the future was all brightly lit
With hopes that made the common earth and air,
Seem like transfigured things divinely fair?

Well, for a time they lived as in a dream;
They met and parted, parted, met again,
And ran their lives in one full copious stream
Of joy, and there was nought of pain;
And thus to live at all was very sweet,
And flowers sprang up and blossom'd round their feet.

And so their life and being grew all one,
As twilight mingles with the dying day;

Or as some cloud, that lies anear the sun,
Is interpenetrated with his ray;
They knew not thought, or wish, or grief apart,
But answered perfectly each heart to heart.

O love, O youth and love, before whose eyes
The future gleams, bathed in ideal light,
For whom the world becomes a paradise,
Where hours are winged with pleasures in their flight,
And flowers on earth, and stars in heaven above,
More radiant grow, touched by the spell of love!

Neighbours they were, her father and his sire:
Their homes divided by broad pasture-ground
And stretch of hill, but both in one fair shire,
Near to a river, which, with plashing sound,
Rolled thro' the meadows in majestic sweep,
Holding its mighty course unto the deep.

Her sire was lord of acres rich and broad,
And in the north owned mountain, lake, and moor;
His lands were unto him a kind of god,
But in all other wealth he was most poor.
Strip him of acres which to him were all,
What left? A thing immeasurably small.

It was his monies, houses, his estate,
That others bowed to, not the man within;
His outward robes made all he had of great,
The soul beneath was poor, and weak, and thin.
Unwind a mummy from its garish sheath,
What see you there? A thing of dust and death.

His father was of good and gentle birth,
True gentleman, not honoured for his gold;
Some part, not much, he had in God's green earth,
A few ancestral fields on weald and wold;
Rich only in seven sons, whose brain and hand
Must win their fortunes, and success command.

Too soon there came the waking: with a start
Their happy dreams were brought to sudden end;
Their doom was now to separate, to part,
Or hold each other only as a friend.
Her father frowned on him since he was poor,
So they must meet no more, weep, and endure.

Their life was chilled, its light for ever gone,
It had become a pallid, frozen thing;
The sun no longer brightly on it shone,
Cold winter took the place of genial spring,

For them the summer early 'gan to wane,
Never to blossom into flower again.

Easy to counsel patience—bid forget;
But hard to carry out the stern command,
When the heart breaks, and eyes with tears are wet,
And hope is wrecked like vessel on the strand,
And life is blank, a story all unread,
And them we count the happy who are dead.

So these two found it, yet they bore up well,
And trusted firmly one another's faith,
Knowing whatever sorrow them befell,
That nought should part them,—nought at least but death;
Faithful to one another they should be,
Though far divided by the cruel sea.

And so they were strong-hearted, though it cost
Them many a bitter pang to separate;
And hope, and joy, and life itself seemed lost,
And the whole world around looked desolate;
And that most bitter of all words, "Farewell,"
Sounded as sad as sounds a funeral bell.

. . . . . .

'Tis evening: all the birds are fast asleep,
The flow'rs have closed their petals 'gainst the air;
The glow-worms out of flowery hedges creep,
And light their lamps, which glisten bright and fair;
The leaves with shimmering dewdrops all are wet,
So is the bluebell, and sweet violet.

No whisper of the wind is heard to-night
Amongst the grasses or the branching trees;
And not a cloud crosses the moon's fair light,
Or dims the grace of her white majesties;
A hush lies on the earth, calm, peaceful, still,
Silence on valley, river, copse, and hill.

The only sound is that of waters clear,
Which flow across a shallow pebbled bed,
And wind beneath a bank, now there, now here,
And from a fountain in the hills are fed;
Sweet is their music as they softly rave,
And glass the starry sky within their wave.

There is a little bridge across the river,
Near which grow gnarlèd oak, and ash-trees pale,
And one tall poplar, all whose grey leaves shiver
Though not a breath of wind stirs in the dale;

And a fair willow weeps above the stream,
Which glides along with many a flash and gleam.

And here they meet, these two so soon to part,
Hand clasped in hand, eyes wet with bitter tears;
A pang like that of death at either heart,
Torn with a thousand sorrows, cares, and fears;
Their cheeks all blanched, and whitened with a grief
For which there is no solace, no relief.

A lovely maiden she, robed in the light
Of innocence and youth; deep blue her eyes,
Intense as are the heavens in summer night,
When myriad stars shine in the cloudless skies;
Sunny her hair, as tho' some golden ray
Of sunshine wandering there had lost its way.

A mind to match the face, pure, gentle, good,
Quick to conceive, rapid to understand,
Attuned to catch each quick and varying mood
Of joy or grief; an open, liberal hand;
A tender heart, a voice of softest tone;
A soul to make the griefs of others all her own.

And he—most worthy of this lady fair—
His sympathies were with the right and true;

His thoughts to God and man might all lie bare,
And be exposed unto the public view;
For nothing low or mean, untrue or base,
Had entrance there, much less a dwelling-place.

Noble he was, and generous, and brave,
Large-hearted, good, and chivalrous, and pure;
He was his passions' master, not their slave,
Had learnt to do, and suffer, and endure;
Young he was taught his worser self to tame,
And walk the world unspotted, free from blame.

He was a valiant soldier of the Cross,
One not ashamed to live above the world,
Content to bear the pain, and suffer loss,
His banner not concealed, nor idly furled:
The foes of Christ were his; he boldly trod
The upward path to heaven, and to God.

He was about to sail for southern lands,
Where suns are larger, brighter moons by night,
Where lustrous stars burn over golden sands,
And birds flash by, like gems of living light,
Not thither drawn by any selfish hope,
But that with sin and sorrow he may cope.

No restless enterprise attracts his heart,
Ambition, commerce, draw him not afar;
He seeks not wealth upon the foreign mart,
Nor honour on the bloody fields of war;
Nor would he search for treasure in the mine
Where the red gold or gleaming diamonds shine.

Nor goes he to trace rivers to their source,
Or bring from dusty tombs the mummied dead;
Not his to quell the savage beast by force,
Or track the tiger to his cruel bed;
Nor is his only wish to wander, where
The skies are bluer, more divine the air.

He leaves his home a messenger of peace,
To open fountains sweet in thirsty grounds,
To tell how guilty souls may find release,
And gladden weary ears with joyful sounds;
To give the wretched balsam for their woes,
And make the desert blossom as the rose.

Had Lionel a fortune gone to gain,
Her father on his love had smiled, not frowned;
He had not sued for Margaret's hand in vain,
This gift his deep affection then had crowned.

But what could a poor soldier of the Cross
Expect, but trial, hardship, sorrow, loss?

And she would fain have followed where he led,
  And joined with his, her hand and future fate;
With him no pain or hardship would she dread,
  Or ever at his side feel desolate.
There was no sacrifice she would not make,
The greater, all the better, for his sake.

It might not be: a father's will said "Nay,"
  And by her pleading was not to be bent;
Although she wept, and weeping, oft did pray,
  She could not win her wish, or his consent;
She only could take refuge in her God,
And meekly bow the head, and kiss the rod.

And what could Lionel do but dry her tears,
  And whisper words in strong and hopeful tone,
And bid her look beyond the weary years,
  When he would come and make her all his own;
And then the keenness of their happy bliss
Would more than compensate such pain as this?

He spoke of God, of hope, of love, of all
  That could shed balm upon her troubled breast;

And gently sought all motives to recall
That possibly might soothe her heart to rest;
And then the shadow passed out from her eyes,
And, looking up, she smiled in hopeful wise.

And so they talked, in voices tender, low,
Nor ever doubted of each other's faith,
And said and felt, wherever they might go,
They would be true and trusty until death;
Again, and once again, they said, "Farewell,"
And the words sounded like the passing bell.

And then he stood and kissed away her tears,
And held her trembling to his throbbing heart;
And, torn with anguish and contending fears,
He turned away as if indeed to part;
Then turned again to take one last long look,
And thrilled his frame, and all his pulses shook.

And then they go upon their several ways,
Beneath the passionless and gleaming skies,
From which the moon shed down her clear cold rays,
And stars looked out with bright and pitiless eyes;
And with a slow and faltering step they pass
Across the long and dewy meadow-grass.

They parted thus in sorrow and in tears;
Yet in their hearts faith beat both high and pure,
And hope was strong that in the coming years
Was happiness for them both true and sure,
That though to-night they two must part and sever,
It could not be, it would not be, for ever.

Dream on, dream on, ye fond ones while you may,
Let hope burn in your bosoms strong and bright;
The waking will come soon enough, the day
Will scatter visions of the happy night;
Then will the eyes with bitter tears flow o'er,
For blissful hours that can return no more.

Sundered they were by cruel breadths of sea,
Which rolled between, and kept them far apart;
But severed from each other they might be,
Yet still they grew together heart to heart,
And prayers and thoughts were wafted o'er the deep,
And oft they met in dreams of happy sleep.

Her father was of shallow heart and brain,
Not cruel, and not wantonly unkind,
And so not wholly careless of their pain;
No vow of silence on them did he bind:

He hoped and thought their love would wax in time,
Faint as the echo of a childish rhyme.

And so, in word at least, being left unbound,
Letters were sent as they occasion made,
Or fitting opportunity was found;
But always were they more or less afraid,
That soon this solace even might be gone,
The silent sanction which he gave withdrawn.

These letters, filled with tender words of love,
Affection's messengers, came oft from him;
Letters esteemed by her all things above,
And read with beatings of the heart, eyes dim
With tears,—dear letters, read and read again,
Taking from sorrow something of its pain.

And the sweet pages he received from her,
At intervals too long, came like a ray
Of sunshine to his life, each pulse did stir,
And brought a light into his darkened day,
And often when weighed down by heavy care,
They made him feel as if he trod on air.

And so they waited, hoped, and looked to God,
Hoping 'gainst hope, yet ever patient still,

Bending the head and heart to kiss the rod,
Bowing unto the fiat of His will,
Until, like some fair flower that fades away,
She pined, and drooped, and withered day by day.

At length her patient look, her paler cheek,
The heart that broke beneath a quiet mien,
The faltering step, that ever grew more weak,
The change that was too plain not to be seen,
Touched those that saw her daily weep and sigh,
And brought the fear that haply she might die.

And thus her sorrow won them to relent,
And say her will should also now be theirs;
That to her marriage they would give consent,
And yield the answer to her silent prayers;
And so, like flowers in sunshine after rain,
Her drooping heart revived, grew strong again.

The news was sent across the severing sea,
That Lionel at once to her might come;
"For God," she said, "has gracious been to me,
A light has shone again into my home;
Once thought I we should never meet, dear love,
Until our meeting in the home above.

"But He has left me here to cheer thy way,
To comfort thee in sorrow and in care;
To walk beside thee every coming day,
Thy work for Him, as I have strength, to share;
So to be near thee all my happy life,
A true, a faithful, and a loving wife."

And thus again the weary world grew bright,
The skies seemed clearer, and the flowers more fair;
The earth was robed in hues of richer light,
Filled with a purer and diviner air;
The grass was greener 'neath her happy feet,
The song of birds more joyous and more sweet.

The time was fixed for Lionel to leave
The tropic land for the sweet English shore;
And ah, what pleasant visions did they weave!
How they should meet, and meet to part no more;
For they should move together side by side,
Earth's happiest bridegroom, and its happiest bride.

And thus the days passed on, the weeks flew by,
The ship he was to sail in ploughed the deep;
The hours she counted with a happy sigh,
And dreams of Lionel gave joy to sleep.

Each morning woke her with a new delight,
The time was shorter since the previous night.

At length her hope was crowned, the ship had come,
And dropped her anchor in an English bay;
Had made a prosperous voyage o'er the foam,
And favouring winds had borne her on her way;
And as she heard the welcome news, I wis
That Margaret's heart was full of sweetest bliss.

A sudden song burst from her happy tongue,
Then broke, then thrilled again, then ended there,
For she was restless, kept to nothing long,
Roamed through the house, stepped out into the air;
She had been early up before the dawn,
Tended the swans, and fed the little fawn.

At dusky eve she sought the little wood,
Just as the rounded moon rose white and pale,
And then, in sad and yet half happy mood,
She stood and listened to the nightingale,
As from its throat the song began to flow,
Now quick and hurried, and now soft and low.

She stood entranced in deep and silent thought,
Nor moved until a hasty step drew near,

Which to her temples all the colour brought,
Yet shook her with a nameless dread and fear.
She turned, she saw her father come in sight,
Wan as a moonbeam on the edge of night.

She watched him as he came, she saw him stand
Close at her side, yet stirred not, was quite still;
He held an open letter in his hand,
She could not take it, had no power or will;
She only stared at him, and held her breath,
With eyes all wild, and face as white as death.

She knew it all before he uttered word,
Before the cruel news was said or spoken;
And when it came, it smote her like a sword,
And the poor loving heart at once was broken.
She made no cry, no moan, nor any sound,
But fell all lifeless, smitten to the ground.

Yes, he was dead. Before his time to sail,
He was laid low by illness on a bed,
Where long he lay, held by the fever bale,
And from that couch he never raised his head.
Illness was rapid, poisoned every vein,
And racked and tortured him with burning pain.

His last thoughts were of heaven and Margaret,
Her name was interwoven with each prayer;
And if his eyes with tears grew ever wet,
It was to think his death would bring her care.
He sent her words and messages of love,
And told her they should meet erelong above.

And once his fancy wandered, and he dreamed
He played with her upon the meadow green;
And once again it happy May-time seemed,
As in the long-passed days it erst had been.
And, rising up, he said, "I hear the swell
From the old church of the dear Curfew-bell."

And so he died; and there beside the wave,
Where he had laboured long for Christ and God,
They buried him, and dug his lonely grave,
And planted English flowers upon the sod;
Then left him there to sleep, in that low bed,
Until the day when earth shall yield her dead.

And she—she did not die; she envied death;
Had she her will she would have lain all white
Upon her bier—to God resigned her breath,
And hid her bitter sorrow from the light.

She would have slept, and with delighted eyes
Have waked to see her Lionel in Paradise.

It was not yet to be,—not yet; she must
Live on and on, and so she bowed her will
To God's, and prayed for patience and for trust;
And praying, grew resigned, and calm, and still,
And lived for others, sought to heal their grief,
And doing so, found for herself relief.

Her gentleness and patience were most sweet,
No one e'er heard a murmur for her woes;
She lived to tend her father, and to meet
Life's daily duties as they daily rose.
But still of her dead self she was the ghost,
All joy, all happiness for her were lost.

And thus for some sad, weary, lonely years,
Marked chiefly by the hours of bitter pain,
For though she smiled for others, oftener tears
Flowed from an aching heart and weary brain.
Had she so pleased she might have often wed,
But her sad heart was buried with the dead.

And thus she gently faded, day by day:
They saw her slowly die before their eyes;
And then all quietly she passed away,—
Smiling she passed, and not with tears or sighs.
God took her home, He took her to the land
Where she and Lionel clasp hand in hand.

What is the meaning of the Christian life?
Is it success? or vulgar wealth? a name?
Is it a weary struggle, a mean strife
For rank, low gauds, ambition, or for fame?
What sow we for? The world? for fleeting time?
Or far-off harvests, richer, more sublime?

The brightest life on earth was one of loss,
The noblest head was crowned with sharpest thorn;
Has He not consecrated pain,—the Cross?
What higher crown can Christian brows adorn?
Be we content to follow on the road
Which men count failure, but which leads to God.

THE WATCHMAN.*

THE night still lay on a quaint old town,
On which dumb silence had settled down.
Slowly the minutes were wearing away,
It wanted yet some hours of day;
In the sky were seen no streaks of dawn,
Tho' the midnight bell had chimed and gone—
The city was hush'd in a sleep like death,
Not a sound or motion, pulse or breath;
Save as the shadows began to flee,
The old Dome clock struck the hour of "three,"
Out on the morning solemnly.

Death had entered a darkened room,
Pall'd and shadow'd in dreary gloom,—
A sick man lay on his fevered bed,
With a throbbing heart and restless head;

* It is a custom, I believe, in some old German towns, for the watchman to give the hours in the patriarchal way, and after each has struck, to call for an expression of trust in God.

And at morn the great church bell would toll
From the tall church tower for a passing soul.
Swiftly was ebbing the fair young life,
Soon would pass the anguish and strife;
Ere long another spirit should be,
On the awful marge of that shoreless sea,
Which we only know as Eternity.

When the bell struck "three," a voice was heard,
Which the heart to its centre thrill'd and stirr'd.
It fell, as falls a voice from heaven,
To comfort a soul that is torn and riven;
As it echoed loudly along the street,
Its every accent was strangely sweet,
For into its tones was gathered this sound,
As the Watchman paced his lonely round:
"Trust the Divine the Eternal Three,
After the darkest night shall be
The dawn of a glorious morn for thee."

A wife sat close to that couch of pain,
Weeping to see the dear life wane;
The tears well'd hot from her deep despair,
From an anguish almost too great to bear.

O helpless love, that could only pray!
O fear, that shrank from the coming day!
O yearning wish, that she might die!
A swathèd corpse at his side might lie!
Her sorrow—ah! 'twas piteous to see!
As sternly, slowly, heavily,
The Dome clock struck the hour of "three."

All things told of the coming woe—
The firelight burning red and low,
The night-lamp waxing faint and dim,
As though fire and lamp felt the Presence grim—
And the sick man moaned beneath his breath,
His pulses beating a march to death;
But now there came on his failing ear,
The cry of the watchman, solemn, clear;
Like an angel's voice it seemed to be,
Floating along the glassy sea,
Tuned to celestial melody.

And when the tread of the watchman's feet
Came echoing down the silent street,
And his words came sounding along the night,
To the lady's eye there stole a light;

And her troubled face grew calm and still,
And her head was bowed to God's loving will;
For the watchman's words throbb'd on the air
In the holy tones of a saintly prayer—
Words that had each a harmony,
Caught from the deep Eternity,
And telling of coming victory.

Then over the face of the dying man,
So thin and worn, so deathly wan,
There passed a beautiful smile of peace,
A look of wonderful rest and ease;
And a radiance flushed both cheek and brow.
The Master had come for His servant now,
And sweetly from far rose the watchman's cry,
Like the strains of some heavenly minstrelsy,
"Trust the Divine the Eternal Three,
After the darkest night shall be
The dawn of a glorious morn for thee."

A still white face lay on the bed—
The pathetic face of the newly dead—
O'er-leant by living face of one
All pale and wan, and love undone;

But the breaking heart gave forth no cry,
Not a tear-drop fell from the burning eye,
For there sang in her soul, now more than calm,
Triumphant as voice of some noble psalm—

"Trust the Divine the Eternal Three,
After the darkest night shall be
The dawn of a glorious morn for thee."

A PARABLE FROM NATURE.

FROM out a heap of roughest stones,
Close to the highway's side,
Blossom'd a little fairy flower,
Azure and golden-eyed.

It drew its sweet and mystic life
From that rude, rocky bed;
Hence sprang each green and slender leaf,
On dews and sunshine fed.

Emblem of faith did then appear,
That beauteous flower to me,
Faith growing stronger from the power
Of dark adversity.

Submissive still beneath the stroke
Of trial's needful rod:
Still keeping pure its quenchless light,
And looking up to God.

"THE HOPE DEFERRED THAT MAKETH THE HEART SICK."

NOW trod she with a restless step the room,
A fevered light within her burning eye;
Anon she paused, and looked out thro' the gloom,
To listen for a step that might go by.

She said,—
"The hills look sad thro' the driving rain,
The wind beats loud on the lattice pane,
I wait for his coming, but all in vain.

Against the shore of the stormy lake
The restless waters in white foam break,
And falling back, a wild moaning make.

I shudder all o'er with a creeping chill,
A dreadful sense of a coming ill;
I pace the room, and cannot keep still.

I have watched three days that seem like years,
I have waked three nights in blinding tears;
I am sick at heart with these doubts and fears.

The shadows are gathering all around,
The night is closing. I hear no sound,
But screech of owl, and bay of hound.

There is no one near—I am all alone,
No one to care how I weep or moan,
Oh that I lay 'neath the cold grey stone!

Hark! thro' the rain and wind that beat,
I hear a sound as of coming feet;
Is it he, is it he that I long to greet?

Oh, no, no! they have passed the door,
Why should I hope when hope is o'er?
O fool, to be fooled for evermore!

O false heart! they told me so;
Told me of all the grief and woe,
But I scorned their words, and bade them go.

And he, what cares he for the pain,
The vanished hope, the aching brain,
The heart that breaks with the maddening strain?"

She sank upon the floor, and grovelled low,
And in the dust she bowed, and laid her head,
And only that she shook with sobs of woe
You might have deemed she was amongst the dead.

So fares it with all, and so it ever must,
Who make frail man their hope, not God their trust;
Their idols shattered lie, and crumbled into dust.

AN OLD LETTER.

THE other morn, when all in careless part,
I searched the papers in an old bureau,
I met with one which thrilled and moved my heart,
Quickened my pulse, and made my eyes o'erflow.

It was a little sheet all overrun
With writing by a hand once clasped in mine,
A hand more prized than aught beneath the sun,
Whose gift turned all my earthly to divine.

Dear hand! that with itself gave all it had,
Heart—confidence and love, yea every thought,
Whose lightest touch had power to make me glad,
Such sunshine into every day it brought.

Alas! dear hand, that thou should'st be more frail
Than this once fair, but now discoloured sheet--
More passing than this ink, so faint and pale,
In which are traced these thoughts all pure and sweet.

O memories that pierce the heart with pain!
O sorrow, that in tears finds best relief!
O bitter anguish, all renewed again!
O fresh return of agony and grief.

Dear letter, thou shalt bide with me till death,
And in the narrow coffin with me lie,
For I shall tell them with my parting breath,
That we must rest together—thou and I.

THREE SONNETS.

THE ORIGIN OF THE FORGET-ME-NOT.

I.

EDEN all fresh, just finished by the Lord,
Glowed with rich beauty, marvellously fair;
Bright flowers like jewels gemmed the dewy sward,
And filled with fragrance all the balmy air.
God looking on His world, pronounced it good,
Perfect throughout, from greatest unto least;
Adam, Creation's crown, in glory stood
His Maker's image, Nature's King and Priest.
To him each beast of field or forest came,
All lowly crouching, fawning at his feet,
To which he gave, as fitted each, a name,
An appellation to their instincts meet;
And birds of air folded their downy wings,
And waited near him, with all living things.

II.

Then went he round the garden's radiant bowers,
That he might do the same for herb and plant,
And give to all the sweet and starry flowers
The name which now appeared their only want.
Here grew the lily white, and violet fair,
The azure gentian, oxlip, eglantine,
All buds and blooms that scent the summer air,
Some blue, some purple, some as red as wine:
Some barred with gold, or striped and pied with green,
Some drooping, slender, some erect and tall,
But lovely each, and of a glossy sheen;
And Adam named them, thought he named them all,
But as he moved away his ear was caught,—
There came a pleading voice, "Forget-me-not!"

III.

Hidden within its leaves, he had passed by
This modest little flower, so very fair,
And had not seen its gold and azure eye,
Nor knew it grew in tender beauty there,
Till there came whispering thro' its slender leaves
A voice so low, 'twas tho' a zephyr sighed,—

Regretfully as one who mourns and grieves—
"Forget-me-not! forget-me-not!" it cried.
Hence has this flower its name; and far above
All others it is dear to friendship's heart,
Is consecrated wholly now to love,
A gift till time shall end, when dear ones part,
Who to each other, weeping their sad lot,
Thro' this sweet flower shall say, "Forget-me-not."

RECOLLECTIONS OF A PICTURE.

IT is an antique chamber: midnight's pall
Has thrown its shadows o'er the pannell'd wall,
The frescoed ceiling and the oaken floor,
The inlaid cabinet, the massy door,
The time-worn tapestry which clothes the room,
And lends its share of deep funereal gloom.
The gloom is broken by the pale moonbeams,
Which thro' the casement pour in fitful gleams,
And mingle with a lamp's dull, sickly glow,
That 'thwart the spacious chamber strives to throw
A ray that flickers feebly on the night,
And gives what is, and yet what is not, light.
Upon the dark and polished oaken floor
There lies a dagger stained with gouts of gore,
Near to a couch, where, 'neath the lamp's pale sheen,
A something lies which is but dimly seen:
Seems it a human form, but cover'd round
With drapery down flowing to the ground.

Full in the moonshine, lonely sits there one
Whom woe and grief seem to have made their own;
Her hands are clasped convulsively, her eye
Is wild, and fixed in some strange agony,
Out-starting from the socket, and the tear
Is dried upon the pupils, hot and sear;
The face is blanch'd and scared, but here and there
A hectic burns, the symbol of despair;
While o'er her form, like some dark torrent's flow,
The raven masses parted from her brow,
In loosened tresses wildly streaming fall,
And reach the floor of that dim-lighted hall,
Lending her cheek the wan and ghastly white
Of snows that shiver 'neath the moon's cold light.
Her bloodless lips press tightly; some sore pain
Shoots through her heart, and sears her tortured brain,
And wrings her soul, and gives that frightful air
Of mingled dread, defiance, and despair.
Some dreadful wrong, some deed of guilt or crime,
Has lined her pallid face; it is not time,
For few her summers seem, and she is fair,
Despite the agony that struggles there,
And wastes her with its fire. You know not why,
But when yours meet that wild and burning eye,

A nameless chill and fear upon you seize,
That curdles up the blood, and makes it freeze:
As his would do, if slimy worms should creep
And coldly writhe about his limbs in sleep,
Who then wakes horribly, with sudden start,
To find them clust'ring loathly round his heart.
What well of anguish springs in that young breast?
Is guilt, or frenzy, that fair bosom's guest?
There is not one to tell; but it must be
A dark, no doubt a guilty history.
And oft for hours I sit and muse, and frame
Me reasons why that blight upon her came,
Which wither'd up her youth, and on it fell,
To shadow all her life with its dark spell.
They say, on earth there is not one who knows
The tale of that fair lady's bitter woes;
And that the record is immersed in gloom,
And buried with the painter in his tomb,
For ever with him perishing.

A CONCEIT.

1848.

TRANSLUCENT stream, whose waters as they glide,
Thy mossy banks and flower-pied margent lave,
Glassing the while within their silver tide
The reeds whose polish'd shafts bend o'er thy wave,
And on whose breast, amid its leaves of green,
The water-lily's pure white blossom grows,
As Spring and Winter hand in hand were seen,
One scattering verdure, and the other snows—
Much do I love to haunt thy murm'rous stream,
To think of *one*, and of her fondly dream;
For rises near thy banks Armida's bower,
Amidst its roses she the fairest flower.

Spring's earliest violet and primrose shed
On all the fragrant air their sweets around,

And here the star-eyed daisy lifts its head,
And frosts the carpet of the flowery ground;
Here, too, the purple butterflies among
The leafy branches dart with glittering wing,
Radiant as stars that shoot the heaven along,
And on their path a lustrous splendour fling;
Here Philomel with music charms the night,
That, wrapt in silence, lists with pleased delight;
But tho' harmonious rang the crystal spheres,
Armida's voice sweet only to my ears.

And here the winds among the tall reeds sigh,
Making their tubes the organs of sweet sound;
And melancholy music murmurs by,
As tho' the genii of the breezes round,
Tuned their soft, viewless harps upon the air.
Morn's earliest ray, sweet river, gilds thy stream,
The sun's last look rests on thy waters fair,
And loth to take from thee his lingering beam,
He slowly sinks into the purple west,
Enamoured of the beauties of thy breast;
But did Armida sun thee with her eyes,
Thou'dst henceforth scorn the sunlight of the skies.

Armida 'tis that makes the flower seem fair,
Armida who the common earth makes bright,
Armida's voice with music fills the air—
Armida's eye that gives the sun his light!
Oh! the dark depth of that inspiring eye,
Whose every flash seems sent forth but to kill!
Yet who could storm against such enemy,
Or think to die by such sweet death an ill?
Thus I, tho' looking, die, yet can't refrain,
But look and die—to look and die again!
Oh! hard it is, the fatal truth to prove
That we must die even by that we love.

TO A FRIEND,

WITH A BOOK.

AH, gentle friend! if e'er, in after days,
When I, and those sweet hours I passed with thee,
Shall all forgotten be,
These few and feeble words should meet thy gaze,
And they should one, but one remembrance bring
Of me from mem'ry's spring,
My wish is gain'd,—it may be idle, yet
I would not have thee quite those days forget.

It is at best a sad, sad thing to part,
From those we hold amongst our cherished friends;
But yet, alas! it sends
A deeper sorrow thro' the mourning heart,
To think that with the word "Farewell," our lot
Is then to be forgot,
Dropt from the memory,—*this* makes our grief,
To think regret for us will be so brief.

Farewell! and when thou think'st upon the hour,
When, at a wish of thine, I did engage
To trace upon the page
These lines, I would that they may have the power,
To bring into thy breast one passing thought
Of me, with kindness fraught;
As streamlets mingle gently with the seas,
So would I with thy cherished memories.

And when life's morn is wearing on to even,
May each remembrance carry with it joy,
Unsullied by alloy;
And as, altho' the sun be set, yet heaven
Still wears a lustre from his parting ray,
So may life's closing day,
Tho' youth be o'er, still sparkle with a light,
Reflected from a past serene and bright!

THE MARRIAGE ZONE.

A BRETON BALLAD, TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF VILLEMARQUE.

I.

ONE day after my betrothal I was forced to take my way,
With the Lord de Rieux's army, where the scene of combat lay;
In the suite of the old Baron I was forced to cross the sea,
That in Wales I might do battle for the Britons bold and free—

"Haste thee now, my page so trusty, and come with me to the fight!"
On this day, O bitter sorrow! out, alas! this woeful night,
Must I to my Bride so gentle say a sad and long adieu;
Oh, the heart within my bosom will with anguish break in two!"

As he neared the ancient mansion, trembled he until he bow'd,
As he crossed the well-known threshold, then his heart beat fast and loud.

"Come, dear knight, draw near the hearthstone, while I give thee bread to eat."
"No, gramercy," thus replied he, "neither want I wine nor meat;
All the favour I implore thee, all the boon I of thee seek,
Is that with thy fairest daughter I may have thy leave to speak."

When the lady heard his answer, off she slipp'd her silken shoon,
Then stepp'd quickly in her hosen, stepp'd up to the bedside soon,
And thus leaning over gently, spake in accents soft and mild,
"Wake, Aloida! dearest maiden, leave thy bed, my darling child;
Quickly rouse thee from thy slumbers, sweetest daughter, list, I pray,

He, thy true love, craves thy presence, much he has with thee to say."
From the bed the maiden darted, swift as arrow thro' the air,
O'er her snowy shoulders floated masses of her night-black hair.

Then I said, "Alas! Aloida, oh, my brightest, fairest bride,
O'er the sea I sail to-morrow, leaving, sweetest, thy dear side.
We must part, for unto England with the Baron bold I go;
Ah! the dear God knoweth only all the sharpness of my woe."

"In the name of yon blue heaven, sail not, my belov'd, from me,
For the wind it is inconstant, and all treach'rous is the sea.
Should'st thou die, what then would happen to Aloida, hapless dove,
Oh, my heart would break, impatient, waiting tidings of my love.
On the beach I lone shall wander, where the fishers' dwellings rise,

And shall ask of all who meet me, anxious looking in
their eyes:
'Have ye heard, ye kindly seamen, have ye heard, oh,
truly tell:
Aught of him, my own betrothed, him I only love too
well?'"

Thus outspoke the maiden weeping, weeping 'midst her
grief and woe,
Whilst the knight, her sorrow soothing, kiss'd the bright
tears in their flow.

"Ah, forbear, Aloida dearest, sweet! these bitter tears
restrain,
I will bring thee back a girdle from the countries o'er
the main;
Yes, a marriage zone I'll bring thee, of a purple deep and
bright,
All y'decked with burning rubies, sparkling as the stars
of night."

Oh, to see the knight thus seated by the fire's fast-fading
glow,

With Aloida on his bosom, and her head down drooping low,
And her arms his neck encircling, arms as white as driven snow,
All the while in silence weeping, dreading the approach of day,
Of that dark and fatal morning which should tear her love away!

When the dawn at length broke dimly, sadly thus outspoke the knight:
"Hark, my sweet! the cock is crowing, and appear the streaks of light."

"Nay, my love, he only cheats us, rest thou, dearest, patient, still,
'Tis the moon, that softly shineth on the brow of yonder hill."

"Sweetest love, I cry thee mercy, 'tis the sun whose rays appear,
Shining thro' the eastern casement, with a radiance all too clear."

Now he's left the ancient portal, now he's crossed the olden moat,
As he goes the raven croaketh from his hoarse ill-omen'd throat.

If all treacherous is the ocean, tempting to a watery grave,
Far more treacherous still is woman, falser than the changing wave!

II.

When the summer waned to autumn, on the feast of St. John's Day,
Thus, to some of her companions, the young girl was heard to say:

"I saw far upon the ocean, from the top of Mount Arey,
Struggling hard a gallant vessel, which the waves sought for their prey;
On the poop stood my bold lover, like a knight who ne'er would yield,
Clasp'd his hand his gleaming falchion, and before him hung his shield.

And he fought the foemen fiercely, from the place whereon he stood,
Never flinching from the conflict till he fell all bathed in blood."

Thus she said, the fair Aloida, down her cheeks the hot tears glide;
And at Christmas, holy season, she becomes another's bride.

Now good news and joyful tidings greet the ear on every hand,
War is o'er, the knight returneth, victor, to his native land.
As he flies, on wings of rapture, to Aloida's long'd-for home,
Sounds of loud and dulcet harpings from each brilliant chamber come;
And from every window'd lattice lights are streaming gay and bright,
Chasing all the gloomy shadows from the raven wings of night.

"O ye singers of the Yule-tide, who now cross the fields to me,

What good tidings can ye tell me of the house from whence ye be?
Say, what meaneth all this music, borne along so sweet and clear
From the doors of yonder mansion to the pleased and listening ear?"

"There are on the harp sweet players, two and two who skilful play,
When the bridal milk-soup reaches first the happy bride's doorway;
There are others, harpers also, who play sweetly three and three,
As the milk-soup first is carried o'er the porch with mirth and glee."

III.

Whilst the serfs and vassals bidden feasted richly, one and all,
Came there up a traveller lowly, asking shelter in the hall:
"Give me, gentle sirs, I pray you, of your pity give me bread;

Night is hastening, and I know not where to lay my
weary head."

"Welcome art thou, wanderer weary; thou shalt find
both food and rest,
And at table shalt be seated with the noblest and the
best;
Pray draw nigh, friend, that my husband and myself
may tend our guest."

As they trod the first gay measure, said the bride with
winsome glance:
"What is't aileth thee, poor stranger, that thou dost not
join the dance?"

"Nothing, lady. If I dance not," answered he with
falt'ring breath,
"'Tis that, worn and faint with travel, I am wearied unto
death."

As they trod the second measure, said the bride with
winsome glance:
"What! art weary still, I pray thee, that thou wilt not
join the dance?"

"Lady, yes, I am a-weary; oh, most weary am I still!
And a weight is at my bosom, and a pain my heart doth fill."

At the third dance, smiling sweetly, thus outspoke the lady free:
"Come, sir stranger, of thy courtesy, come and join the dance with me."

"Lady, surely this great honour is, for one like me, too high;
Yet who could be so uncourteous as decline or pass it by?"

As they dance he leans and whispers, hissing hoarsely in her ears,
Whilst a smile both wan and ghastly on his white lips now appears,
"Where's the ring of gold I gave thee, at the door where here we stand?
Scarce a twelvemonth has pass'd over since I press'd it on thy hand."

Then, with eyes and hands uplifted, cried the bride in awe-struck tone,

"All my peace, O God, is over, all my happiness is gone!
Deeming that I was bereavèd, that my first love lost his life,
Now, instead of one, two husbands claim me for their wedded wife!"

"No! thou'rt wrong indeed, fair maiden, not one husband hast thou now;"
And forth from his vest he draweth, with an angry flashing brow—
Draweth forth the hidden dagger, which he to the very hilt
Buries in the maiden's bosom, trembling deeply for her guilt.
Then her head down drooping slowly, on his quivering breast she lies,
And close to the heart that loved her, calling on her God, she dies.

. . . . . .

In Daouly's cloister'd Abbey, you may see a statue fair,
'Tis of Christ, His virgin mother, which a purple zone doth wear;

'Tis y'decked with sparkling rubies, that most costly seem
to be,
And have all been brought with danger far from countries
'cross the sea.
Would'st thou know who made the offering? Ask the
prostrate monk that lies
At the feet of Mary, shaken with a storm of tears and
sighs.

LORD NANN AND THE FAIRY.

A BRETON BALLAD, FROM THE FRENCH OF VILLEMARQUE.

I.

LORD Nann and his gentle bride were wed in days of early youth,
And early they were doomed to part, tho' full of love and truth.
But yesterday the dame bore twins, white as the drifting snow,
And sweet as spring-tide roses are, which from one stalk outgrow.

"Now tell me, love, what is the food for which thy heart doth pine,
And as this day a son thou'st borne, it quickly shall be thine.
Wilt woodcock from the valley have, where grows the primrose sweet,

Or venison from the deep green-wood to make thee
savoury meat?"

"Oh, venison, dear, it likes me best! but weary is the
chase;"
The words her lips had scarcely crossed when he started
from his place,
And seized right fast his oaken spear his manly hands
between,
Then leaped with speed on his coal-black steed and gained
the forest green.

A milk-white doe full soon he saw on the borders of the
brake,
He followed so fleet, that beneath his feet the trembling
earth did shake;
He followed so fleet, that from his brow the big drops
fell like rain,
And his gallant courser's panting sides the foam did fleck
and stain.

And now the sinking day declined, and deepened into
night,
While overhead the radiant stars shone out both clear and
bright.

Near to the grot of Königinn, where all was soft and
green,
A streamlet held its silver course the flowers and moss
between.

Lord Nann he now did light him down, close to the
streamlet's brink,
And stooping low he thought full sure the cooling wave
to drink.

II.

Beside her well, the Königinn sat combing out her hair,
She combed all with a golden comb the tresses bright and
fair;
For rich they say such ladies are: oh, richer far, I ween,
Than dames who stately lead the dance in halls of king
and queen!

"How! Art so rash as dare to shake the Fairy's charmed
well?
Here take thy choice of these three things, which to thy
face I tell:
Wed me at once, upon this spot, or pine for seven long
years,

Or die, ere three short days have run their course, in grief
and tears."

"With thee I may not, cannot wed, as for a twelvemonth
now
A sweet young bride has called me lord, and owns the
marriage vow;
Nor shall I pine for seven long years, nor die in three
short days,
But when it pleaseth God I shall, in His all-gracious
ways.
And yet I'd die contented here, and end at once my life,
All cold outstretched upon my bier, sooner than call thee
wife."

III.

"Kind mother, as thou lovest me, oh, make my bed full
soon!
If until now it be not made, I pray thee grant this
boon,
For I am sick and very weak, but do not breathe a
word
To my own dearest spouse of this, to him I call my
lord.

Yet in three days I shall be there, 'where the weary are at rest,'
And pillow my head amongst the dead, down on the earth's cold breast.
On me a Königinn has cast, I know the truth full well,
A charm that withers up my life, a dark unholy spell."
And when three days had flown away, the young wife feebly said,
Her snowy hands both pressed against her hot and throbbing head:

"Oh, tell me, mother, of my lord! why do the bells all ring,
Why do the priests chant down below, why white-robed do they sing?"

"A poor, unhappy man, my love, who lodged with us, has died;"
"Oh, tell me, mother mine, what keeps my husband from my side!"

"He's ridden to the town, my child, and soon thou shalt him see;"
"Dear mother, now I pray thee tell, and truly tell to me,

What robe shall I put on this day, my blue robe or my red,
That I may go into the church and hear the masses said?"

"If thou dost want the newest mode, why then I hear them say,
A black robe is the fittest gear for those who go to pray."

As up the churchyard's sloping path right gently she passed on,
Lo! her poor husband's grave she sees, and at its head a stone;
"Which of our kin has died so late?" in faltering voice she said,
"That all so fresh the earth is turned. Oh, tell me who is dead!"

"Alas! my darling daughter, 'tis vain to hide it now;
O, woe! it is thy husband, who doth lie the earth below."

On her two knees the lady sank, she sank to rise no more,

Her spirit passed to that bright land, where her lord had
gone before.

'Twas strange, I ween, when fell the night upon the day
she died,
And down they laid her in the grave, close to her
husband's side,
To see two oaks spring from the tomb, which reared their
branches high,
All rich in summer foliage green, against the clear blue
sky;
And on their boughs two milk-white doves sat fluttering
bright and gay,
Which, when the purple morning broke, to heaven did
wing their way.

MERLIN, THE BARD.

A BRETON BALLAD, TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF VILLEMARQUE.

I.

" IST, list to me, good grandam mine: I to the feast would go,
Where holds the king a royal race in kingly pomp and show."
"Thou shalt not to this feast, my son. I do not hide my fears;
Thou shalt not to this feast, I say, for thy cheek is wet with tears.
An' I can stop thee, dearest son, thither thou may'st not go,
For in thy dreams the hot tears fell like rain in wintry flow."
"Kind mother, little mother mine, seek not thy son to keep."

"In going thither thou shalt sing, returning thou shalt weep."

II.

He has saddled his bay palfrey, all shod with polished steel;
The splendid housing decks his side, all o'er from head to heel.
He puts the bit within his mouth, round his neck a ring he throws;
And from his long and glossy tail a streaming ribbon flows.
Upon his shining back he mounts, and to the feast he hies,
And gallops on right gallantly, as fleet as bird that flies.
Now, as he nears the longed-for spot, the braying trumpets sound,
And the people press in their gala dress, and the prancing horses bound.

Then up and spake a herald bold, in voice heard far and near,
"To him who in the lists to-day the highest bar shall clear,

To him who in a perfect leap shall pass the boundary wide,
The king's fair daughter shall be given, a sweet and beauteous bride."
Reared high the palfrey at the words, and, bounding, neighed aloud;
The fire flashed brightly from his eyes, from his nostrils came the cloud.
Now curvets he, now prances he, now pawing snuffs the ground;
Now with the speed of light he clears the barrier at a bound,
Leaving all rivals in the race at a distance far behind.
And now the victor's voice is heard, floating along the wind:
"My lord the king, I claim as mine, Lindore thy daughter fair,
In virtue of thy royal oath, my heart and home to share."
"Lindore thy bride shall never be, ne'er wed with one so low;
No sorcerer shall be her lord, or hear her marriage vow."

Then whispered him an aged man, near to the king's
right hand,
Whose beard, all whiter than the wool, fell to his girdle's
band.
All dight he was in woollen robe, fringed with bright
silver lace,
Such as doth oft in stately halls a monarch's person
grace.
When heard the king the sage's words, three hasty blows
struck he
With the golden sceptre in his hand on the table at his
knee.
So loud he struck, the nobles all kept silence deep and
still,
And hearkened they with breathless awe, as the king
spoke out his will:
"If thou can'st bring me Merlin's harp," so spake he out
at last,
"Which with four golden chains is bound, and bounden
too, full fast;
If Merlin's harp thou bringest me, which hangeth at his
bed,
Why, then, mayhap, my daughter dear at the altar thou
shalt wed.

III.

"Kind grandam mine, dear grandam mine, as thou dost
love me well,
I pray thee by thy love to me, forthwith thy counsel
tell;
Or else this weary heart will break, its strings will break
with woe,
And to the grave at once I'll pass, and lie the green sod
below."
"This had not been," his grandam said, "had'st thou my
bidding done;
But weep no more, dear child of mine, the harp shall be
thine own.
Then weep no more, my grandson dear, this golden
hammer take,
Beneath its stroke no sound is heard, it falls like white
snow-flake."

IV.

"Rejoice ye in this palace all, since I've return'd with
speed,
Bearing the harp of Merlin back to claim my promised
meed."

Now, when the king's good son him heard, he whispered to his sire,
And the king himself outspoke right loud, and his eyes they flashed with fire:
"Now, by my royal crown, young sir, yea, by my kingly life,
If thou old Merlin's ring wilt bring, my daughter is thy wife."

Back to his grandam then he hies in haste and burning tears,
And now in rage, and now in grief, makes known to her his fears.
"My lord the king has spoken thus, and so and so he said."
"Grieve not for this, keep up thy heart, nay, never droop thy head:
Take thou that branch which yonder lies within my casket small;
From out it grow twelve little leaves which softly rise and fall—
Twelve little leaves, and brighter far than any burnished gold.

Seven nights I spent in seeking them beneath the moonlight cold.
Full seven long years ago it was, in seven darkling woods,
Where the place is full of terrors, and blackness always broods.
At midnight, when the cock he crows, your steed then quickly take,
And let not fear assail your heart, Merlin shall not awake."
At dead of night, when crew the cock, the bay steed bounded on,
Scarce has the cock his crowing ceased ere Merlin's ring is won.

v.

Before the king at early morn again the young man stood,
Who at that sight rose up at once in dazed and wondering mood;
Astonished, too, were all the men gathered in presence there,
And eyed the youth all o'er and o'er, with amazed and anxious stare.

"Behold his bride he's won," they cry, "his bride he's
nobly won;
And she shall be his lawful wife in the sight of yonder
sun."
The king now and his son withdrew, and the old man
he retires,
But soon returning with them both, the king spake his
desires:
"'Tis true, my son, as thou hast heard, this day thou'st
won thy wife;
There's only one thing more I ask, I swear it by my
life.
It is the last,—in doing this, thou shalt be my true son,
My daughter then shall be thy bride, and all Leon is
thine own.
By my forefathers' bones, bring here great Merlin to our
sight,
And when he comes, I swear that he shall bless the
marriage rite."

VI.

"Oh, Merlin, Bard! whence comest thou in weeds so sad
and torn—

Where goest thou with naked feet, bare head, and face
forlorn?
Oh whither, say, in this sad plight, old Merlin, dost thou
go,
With oaken staff, and troubled brow, and eyes that
overflow?"
"Seeking my harp in this sad world, my consolation
sole,—
Seeking my harp, and eke my ring,—their loss has
brought me dole."

"Merlin, old Merlin, grieve thou not, let these tidings
soothe thy pain,
Not lost are either harp or ring, they shall be thine
again;
Come in, come in, poor Merlin, and take some meat with
me."
"No! no! I cannot cease my walk, nor eat nor drink
with thee;
No food shall ever pass these lips till I my harp have
found:
Till this is done, the world I pace in one long weary
round."

"Merlin, oh Merlin! heed me now, and thou thy harp shalt find."

So sore she pressed him that at last she won upon his mind,

And then he comes into her house, and quietly sits down;

But still all woeful is his heart, and his tears they flow adown.

At evening comes the old dame's son, and finds old Merlin there;

He shakes with fear as he glances round, and sees the minstrel's chair.

The minstrel's head droops on his breast, sleep binds him in its chain,

The son he thinks he now can flee from his mother's house amain.

"Hush, hush, my child, fear not at all, Merlin is wrapped in sleep;

You need not fear that he will start from out his slumber deep.

Three ruddy apples, fair to see, I in the embers laid,

These roasted well, I gave to him; hush, son! be not afraid;

He ate the three, he'll follow thee wherever thou dost go,
Through forest dark, o'er mountain high, or in the valley low."

VII.

From out the royal bed the queen thus to her women said:
"What great arrival has there been? Why has the trumpet brayed?
The morning's light had hardly fall'n upon the dewy ground,
When the pillars of my bed did shake 'neath the loud and joyous sound.
Why shout the mob? I pray you tell. What mean these voices loud?
Why rings the sky with praises high, as from a mighty crowd?"

"Merlin, the noble Bard, is come, the citizens rejoice;
Therefore you hear the trumpet's flare, and the people's shouting voice.

There comes with him an aged crone, and there walketh
at her side
Your fair young son who is to have your daughter for
his bride."

When the king he hears the tidings, he hurries out right
fast,
And runs to meet old Merlin, and to the Bard doth haste.

"Arise, good herald, from thy bed, awake, arise, arise,
And publish through the land the news, proclaim it in
this wise:
'Who will may to the marriage come, may join the
wedding feast;
All people in the land may come, from highest unto
least.
For eight days shall the feast be held all in my palace
here,
In honour of my sweet Lindore, my child, my daughter
dear.'"
To the marriage all the nobles ride, the nobles of
Bretagne,
The judges and the gallant knights, each true and
princely man.

And first the Counts, and then the poor, and eke the rich beside,
They swiftly to the palace come from all the countryside.

"Silence! keep silence, all who come, and hear the king's command:
The marriage of the royal maid! For eight days from the land
Let come who will—aye, come ye sirs, come ye both one and all;
No matter what your rank or age, come ye both great and small.
To the marriage all ye nobles hie, ye nobles of Bretagne,
Ye judges and ye gallant knights, Churchmen and warlike man;
Come first the mighty Counts, and then come both ye rich and poor—
The rich and poor, who shall not lack of gold or silver store.
Nor shall they want, or meat or drink, or wine or hydromel,
Or couches soft on which to rest, or men to serve them well.
Two porkers fat shall here be slain, two hundred bulls or more,

Two hundred heifers, and of deer as many as five score;
Two hundred beeves, half black, half white, whose horns shall given be
To all who come from far and near this wedding high to see.
Then for the priests, an hundred robes of wool as white as snow,
An hundred collars all of gold, with pearls in every row;
Each warrior shall have one,—shall have it for his own,
And wear it as a loyal badge of fealty to the throne.
A chamber filled with cloaks all blue—blue as the sky above—
For ladies young, and fair, and chaste, and gentle as the dove.
Eight hundred warm new garments to the poorest shall be given,
For well we know how dear they are, how cared for up in heaven.
And lastly, in their seats aloft, both through the night and day,
One hundred well-skilled minstrels upon their harps shall play;
While Merlin, Bard, amidst the court shall celebrate, I ween,

The marriage-rite, and all shall say, such feast was never seen."

"List, all ye skilful cooks, I pray,—what! is the marriage o'er?"
"It is: the splendid pageant's passed, such shall be seen no more."

For fifteen joyous days it held, and all was glad and gay,
And now unto their homes again they all have passed away;
Nor went they empty to their homes, but laden with rich store
Of royal gifts and venison which to their land they bore.
The bridegroom to fair Leon's land his bride with joy he bears,
And all are happy but the king: his eyes are full of tears,
His heart is sad and sorrowful: his heart is sick and sore;
His daughter she has left his home; he shall see her nevermore.

Merlin again is lost to sight, none know where bideth he,
Whether in cavern of the earth, in air, or in the sea.

LINES SUGGESTED BY SEEING A DEAD INFANT ON ITS MOTHER'S BREAST.

T lay upon its mother's breaking heart,
Whose sobs convulsive seemed to lend it life,
For now the snow-white garments swelling rose,
Now fell, as tho' quick pulses played beneath;
But they were stilled for ever. One short month
The mother clasped her first-born to her heart,
And then came envious Death with ruthless face,
And breathing on it chilled its blood to ice,
And the pure spirit took its flight to God.
Upon its marble cheek a blush of pink,
Like that which flushes o'er the sea-shell's rim,
As if enamoured of a couch so pure,
Slept still; and thro' the parted lips you'd think
There ever stole a balmy breathing forth,
So like to sleep was death.
Its little dimpled hand a lily clasped,

Meet emblem of itself, so fair, so sweet,
And plucked withal untimely, ere the rose
Had time to deepen on its rounded cheek.
But lingered on its mouth a seraph smile,
For Death, repentant of the theft he made,
Had left it there, to soothe the mother's woe.

FOR MUSIC.

ON the marge of the Ocean when daylight is gone,
I muse in sad thought by the surf-beaten shore;
And weep out my woes as I wander alone,
To mingle my sighs with the hoarse-sounding roar.

Oh, my Norah, my darling, my heart aches for thee!
Thou hast gone, and hast left me thy loss to deplore;
In the world there is nothing but darkness for me,
No! the light and the joy are fled evermore.

'Twas she that gave hope and a charm to my life,
She doubled its pleasures, she brightened its grief;
My own one, my dear one, my angel, my wife,
Whom I clasped to my heart in a rapture too brief!
Oh, would that I lay 'neath the fathomless wave!
That over me rolled the wild billowy surge,
That winds sweeping round me might mournfully rave,
And sing me to rest with a low moaning dirge!

FOR MUSIC.

RIVER, flowing downward to the sea,
Tell her that dwells upon its sounding shore,
That more than all the world she is to me,
That all my thoughts fly to her evermore.

Methinks I see her wand'ring on the strand,
In pensive mood and meditative dream,
And as she holds a white rose in her hand,
She plucks the leaves and casts them in the stream.

"He loves me,—loves me not,"—she sadly says,
"He loves me not,—he loves,"—her voice here breaks,
And then the tears suffuse her happy eyes,
And hope within her heart once more awakes.

Oh tell her, River, she to me is sweet,
Dear as the life of which she is a part,
And say that I am coming to her feet,
To lay down there the treasure of my heart.

Pray her to take the off'ring that I give,
And ask her heart, in sweet exchange for mine:
Without her, say, it is not life to live,
Only a death in which for life I pine.

And, say, I follow soon where thou dost flow,
And that to her my soul's true currents move,
That when I reach her presence she shall know
How pure my passion and how deep my love.

TWO SUMMER MORNS.

THE flowers bloom again, and I tread the old way
Where together we both used so often to stray;
Where we sat side by side on the marge of the stream,
Entranced from the world in a sweet waking dream;
In the fair summer morn.

Alas! all is changed, and I wander alone;
Where once there were two there is now only one;
One footstep, one voice, one heart that is stirr'd,
As thrills from the copse the low song of the bird;
In this dark summer morn.

No thought ever cross'd me that *thou* wouldest fail,
That thy vows would ring false, and thy promise prove frail;
I fancied, fond fool, that love was for aye,
True as truth, strong as death, and pure as the sky,
In that sweet summer morn.

Such for thee was my love. And thine? let that be;
Not a cry shalt thou hear, not a tear shalt thou see;
If I bleed, 'twill be inly; if I mourn, none will know;
Graves close o'er their dead,—so my heart o'er its woe—
In this sad summer morn.

But, by faith thou hast slain, and by joy that is fled,
By love thou hast killed, and by hope that is dead,
Come not to my grave with a foolish regret:
I forgive thee. Enough! to repay me—forget,—
By my anguish this morn.

LINES FOR A SILVER WEDDING.

OUR wedding-day, our silver wedding-day,
O love! for us how fast
The happy years have lightly flown away,
Each quicker than the last!
These years have drawn us closer than before,
And each to other is not less, but more.

When looking full, dear wife, into thy face,
In the clear morning's glow,
I hardly miss of thy lost youth a grace;
Though true, upon thy brow
Some lines, time-touched, I see, but lately there,
And threads of silver gleaming through thy hair.

Some sorrows, and some joys, some smiles and tears,
And days, some dark, some bright,
Have left a mark upon the passing years,
A chequered shade and light.

But blessings, more than any tongue can say,
Blossom'd like flowers upon our onward way.

For you remember in the early time,
When yet the months were young,
And married life was in its early prime,
Our hearts to hope were strung.
Alas! in vain. The little fragile life
Passed from thy fond embrace to Christ's, dear wife.

And when the babe, so new to earth, had died,
Ah! then with tears of pain,
We put the little empty cot aside,
Where our first-born had lain;
We hid it out of sight, we could not bear
To see the place where lay our infant fair.

Soft now the memory of that one loss,
God-sent our faith to prove,
And, looking back, we see the bitter cross
Transfigured all by love.
Long since the grief has faded from thine eyes,
And smiles for mercies to the lips arise.

Indeed, through all the circling years till now,
Blessings have crowned our days;
Thou know'st, O Lord, and only Thou,
What cause we have for praise.
Goodness and mercy, like fair angels twin,
Have watched our going out and coming in.

What shall the years bring in the coming time,
Bright joy or boding fear?
Shall bells ring merrily, or funeral chime
Strike sadly on the ear?
I shrink from this; oh! may I go before
One dear one leaves us for the other shore.

We will not talk of this—sweet love and hope,
Are they not with us still?
They gild our life as sunbeams do the slope
Of yonder purple hill.
I cannot think that there are days for me
Emptied of joy, because unshared by thee.

No thoughts of sadness must o'ercast this day,
Our silver wedding, love;
In all our sky must be no tint of gray,
But sunshine from above.

Hark! children's voices on the air are borne,
They haste to greet us on this happy morn.

Let us go forth to meet them as they come;
Ah, wife! words cannot tell
How rich in many a mercy is our home,
God doeth all things well.
So take we heart to front the unknown years,
Love will survive when all else disappears.

August 7th, 1880.

SONNETS.

SONNETS.

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, AMBLESIDE.

SWEET village church amidst the purple hills,
That rise in grandeur from the emerald plain,
Like loving guardians of thy holy fane,
Built within sound of two clear mountain rills,
Whose music all the peaceful valley fills.
Dear house of God! Till life itself shall wane,
Thy memories shall haunt both heart and brain,
Never to fade till death these pulses stills.
Oft in thy walls, so simple, yet so fair,
I've felt the calm that breathed from place and hour,—
The softened light, the organ's mellow power,
Sweet hymn, and thrilling psalm, and holy prayer;
So rapt the spirit, and so deep the spell,
If this were earth or heaven I could not tell.

SONNET.

ST. MARY'S CHURCHYARD, AMBLESIDE.

BEAUTY still lingers on the evening air,
With golden Aureole the West is crowned,
The voice of children is the only sound
That breaks upon this scene so calm and fair,
Apt place for meditation and for prayer.
Ah, as I think of many sleeping here,
Who were to me amongst the known and dear,
This Churchyard to my heart is "holy ground!"
Sweet thought, "God's Acre!" Here the eye of faith
Sees that the tomb with living seed is rife.
This is to me no place of barren death,
For here are sown the quickening germs of life;
They that are laid here only seem to die,—
The grave their gate to Immortality.

SONNET.

THE SAME.

ONE sings, "God giveth His beloved sleep;"
And in this sleep realities, not dreams,
Visit the soul, no brief and transient gleams
Of blessedness,—but rapture full and deep.
God, 'neath the shadow of His throne, doth keep
His dead; upon whose happy spirits streams
Light from His lustrous face in luminous beams,
And never more shall they or mourn or weep.
The sainted ones, each 'neath his grassy ridge,
Who found it Christ to live and gain to die,
Know that the grave is but a narrow bridge,
Which spans the space between the earth and sky,
That they who o'er it cross the darkling river,
Have fellowship with God in bliss for ever.

SONNET.

A DYING WISH.

"That is what I should like—serving continually. Oh, I trust there will be work for me where I am going!"—*Lady Augusta Stanley.*

THEY gathered round her on her dying bed,
Where she was placed death-stricken; there she lay,
In pain and anguish, many a weary day,
After all hope of health had ever fled.
The tide of life was ebbing fast away,
Nor had she any wish on earth to stay;
To what God pleased at once she bowed her head,—
"His will, not mine, be done," she meekly said.
She had not lived for self and selfish gain,
But for the sick, the troubled, and the poor;
Her hands had ministered to soothe their pain,
Her lips had gently taught them to endure;
It was her joy to comfort and sustain,
And staunch the bleeding wounds she could not cure.

SONNET.

THE SAME.

SHE long had yearned for perfect rest and peace;
Her heart had gone before her to the skies,
To which she turned uplifted, wistful eyes,
Hoping that God would give her quick release;
For there the pangs of anguish ever cease,
Sin is no more, nor bitter tears, nor sighs,
But joys and pleasures of God's Paradise,
Which thro' the ages ever shall increase.
But most of all because her love was true,
Ardent and deep, longed she to be with Christ;
And with this strong desire another grew,
And nought but this her craving soul sufficed,
Hence her last words, "When all things are made new,
Will there be work for Him that I can do?"

SONNET.

RESIGNATION.

ASK, O Father, in this hour of woe,
Not to escape the anguish and the pain,
The breaking heart, the aching, wearied brain,
The wasting grief,—not this I ask,—Oh, no!
I only pray that Thou wilt mould me so
As Thou wouldst have me—fashion me again;
Yea, keep me in the furnace till each stain
Be burnt away, and till within my heart
My Saviour sees His own fair counterpart.
I pray that I may meekly kiss the rod
That cuts into the flesh with bitter smart;
And bow me humbly at Thy feet, O God!
Yea, bow till I can say with Thine own Son,
"Not mine, O Father, but Thy will be done!"

SONNET.

AUGUSTINE.

AUGUSTINE, Scholar, Father, holy Saint,
Walked by the sounding ocean on the shore,
Turning in thought grave problems o'er and o'er,
To which he gave his soul without restraint,
Until it grew with musing sick and faint.
And as his baffled heart felt sad and sore,
A child he saw that rose-lipped sea-shell bore,
Which, with an action earnest, and yet quaint,
He filled up from the wave. Then in his hand
He carried it, with happy laugh and leap,
And poured it in a hole scooped in the sand,—
"I mean to empty into this the deep."
"Thus," thought the Saint, "God's mysteries so grand,
Would I within my mind compress and keep."

SONNET.

THE SAME.

SO stand we on the shore and brink of time,
Close to the borders of eternity,
Across whose vast illimitable sea
Sweep echoes of the everlasting chime,—
Voices from that mysterious awful clime
No foot of man hath trod, no eye can see,
Home of the Three in One, the One in Three,
To which, if any creature dared to climb,
The blaze of splendour there would strike him blind.
And yet vain man the Godhead would explore,
His essence,—future, present, and behind,—
Into *his* shell he would this Ocean pour.
But can we hold Him in our narrow mind,
Who Was, and Is, and Is for evermore?

SONNET.

A PICTURE.

CALM is the evening of the summer day,
A golden glory flushes all the sky,
And near the sun bright rosy cloudlets lie,
Steeped in the lustre of his parting ray.
King David, aged, sorrowful, and gray,
Sits on his palace-roof alone ; his brow
Eased of his crown, which lies neglected now
Close at his feet. His thoughts are far away,
And follow with his wistful, straining sight,
A flock of milk-white doves, with glistering breast,
That fly into the liquid sea of light ;
And cries he, as they haste toward the west,
" Oh, that I had the dove's swift wings of flight,
Then would I flee away and be at rest ! "

SONNET.

ASPIRATIONS.

"OH for the swift wings of the rapid dove,
That, piercing thro' the depths of yonder sky,
I might at once attain the realms above,
And taste the joys of immortality!
I yearn to reach the angel-choirs—I long
To mingle with their bright and happy throng!
I thirst to gain that fair and distant home,
Where sin and sadness never more may come!
The weary heart would leave this world of night,
And cast aside the burthen of its woes;
It fain would bask within the living light,
Which from the throne of God for ever flows;
For sorrow's wave may break—oh, never more,
Upon the marge of heaven's eternal shore!"

SONNET.

RIZPAH.

H, mother's love, how strong thou art, how true!
Five weary months sat Rizpah by her dead,
The sackcloth-covered rock her only bed,
From which she rose her watching to renew,
And cared not whether fell the evening dew,
Or burning sun beat hotly on her head,
So long as her two sons, exposed to view,
Hung on the cross. With quick, unsleeping eye,
She drove the lions from their hoped-for prey,
And scared the vultures, swooping in the sky;
And ever thro' the lonely night and day
She, at life's risk, chased bird and beast away,
For love's sake, willing she herself should die;
On her crushed heart such burden did she lay.

SONNET.

A PENITENT.

'Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of."

WHERE but to Thee, O Jesu, can I fly?
My guilt is like a sea without a shore,
Which none can fathom and no eye explore.
I smite upon my breast, with many a sigh,
And feel like one almost at point to die.
My heart is bruised, it bleeds at every pore;
Sick unto death, wounded and aching, sore,
What can I do but weep, as here I lie?
Yet, oh, how sweet, how bitter, bitter-sweet,
If, with these copious, ever-flowing tears,
I could, like Mary, wash Thy blessed feet,
And feel a hope that trembled thro' my fears!
To touch Thee, hold Thee, this were joy complete—
The joy of saints in yonder happy spheres.

SONNET.

TO MY MOCKING-BIRD.

EAR bird, in plumage sober, soft, and gray!
Poets have sung in honour of the lark,
Have hymned the nightingale, which, when the dark
Falls on the woods, pours forth her thrilling lay
Of sweet delicious pain; or hurried, gay;
Exhausting praises on her passionate song
Which floats in liquid sounds the night along.
To me thou art more wonderful than they.
Music has made her home within thy throat.
Now swell thy strains as from a full-voiced quire,
Now sinking low, in rapture they expire.
But e'er the ear has lost the long-drawn note
Another harmony thou hast begun,
My lark, my thrush, my nightingale in one!

SONNET.

THE SAME.

ART musing on thy dear and native woods
Far in the West? The fragrant forests fair,
The gorgeous flowers, and the balmier air,
When in these rapturous, ecstatic moods
Thou pourest song in such harmonious floods
That other songsters, hearing, may despair?
Or dream'st thou of a mate, when there doth roll
The thrilling love-chant gushing from thy soul
In rich melodious strains, so oft renewed?
What moveth thee, a captive as thou art,
To perch here, bold, familiar at my feet,
And tho' from country, kindred, home apart,
To send forth streams of music clear and sweet,
With lifted, quivering wings, and swelling heart?

SONNET.

NATURE.

"In Nature there is nothing melancholy."—*Coleridge.*

THUS sings the poet; but does truth lie so?
Nature, indeed, in beauty rich is clad,
But yet her fairest scenes are often sad;
E'en while we gaze, the eye will overflow;
As certain troubled undertones of woe
Run thro' the very songs that make us glad.
Thus melancholy shadows all below,
We hardly hold our blessings till they go.
Do not our smiles lie very near our tears?
Our brightest joys tread closely on our pains,
Some discords linger thro' the sweetest strains;
And is not hope oft darkened by our fears?
And what the secret of all this? The source?
We find it here, "The world is out of course."

SONNET.

OUR CATHEDRALS.

E vast Cathedrals of our native land,
Whose arches seem designed to prop the sky,
That look as tho' the angels came from high
To do a work beyond a mortal hand,
And rear a stately home for Deity.
What beauty crowns your massive towers, your spires,
Where loves the sun to rest his glittering fires!
Your buttresses and pinnacles how grand!
Relieved by long-drawn shadows, the soft light
Lies on your stately aisles and noble nave,
Your hallowed walls and splendid architrave,
And marble pillars, forests to the sight;
While from your choir there sweep sweet symphonies,
As erst God's voice thro' Eden's twilight trees.

SONNET.

THE SAME.

THRO' the laced fretwork of the storied panes
Streams the rich light, in undulating wave,
On choir and chancel, aisle and pillar'd nave,
Dyeing the floors with many-colour'd stains,
And flushing tombs where rest the honour'd brave.
Your walls, "magnifical" with many a fold
Of carved stone, groin'd oak, and burnished gold,
Are worthy of such consecrated Fanes.
And tho' in ye there burns no mystic cloud,
No Ark with sacramental treasures proud,
Nor bright Shekinah consecrate your dome,
Yet at the call of prayer, He deigns to come
To meet His saints—the Holy One, who says,
"He doth inhabit still His people's praise."

SONNET.

STARS.

YE Stars, that on this woeful Earth rain down
Thick sparkling show'rs of pure and radiant light,
Which make the purple glories of the night
Richer in lustre than a monarch's crown—
Ye stars, that burn in heaven, so clear and bright,
Does the sad sight of ever-flowing tears
Affect you not? The grief that blights and sears,
The seeds of evil that around are sown?
Care ye not for the sin, the pain, the woe,
Which like foul canker at the bosom's core
Open a wound staunchless for evermore?
Oh, feel ye not for those who weep below!
Or look ye from your skies, in cold disdain,
On all this planet knows of stormy pain!

SONNET.

THE CURSE.

THE Earth is tracked by curse, and on each thing,
The fairest e'en, it sadly lingereth.
We all have seen thy ravages, O Death!
We know thy fatal power, have mourned thy sting.
The very flowers die, which clustering spring
Around our feet in many a fragrant wreath;
They fade and wither, tainted with thy breath,
And perish 'neath the shadow of thy wing.
And if these radiant things so very fair,
Woven of suns and showers, bloom but to die,
So is it with all things or bright or rare,
They pass like lights from out the evening sky—
And this dark judgment tarries on earth's brow,
"The creature travails in its pain till now."

SONNET.

A CASAUBON.

THE age was superstitious, light, and vain;
The court was loose, voluptuous, and base;
All men were struggling in the fight for place;
Even the priests thought "godliness was gain,"
Nor deemed it ill their hands with bribes to stain;
Their only aim to be first in the chase
For riches, and to head the eager race;
To be outstripped,—this was their greatest pain.
Casaubon only from such sin was clear,
Nor ever from the right did turn aside,
Looking to God, owning no other fear,
His own convictions caring not to hide;
No! rather would he boldly march to death,
Than, truckling for applause, betray his faith.

SONNET.

PHILIPPA.

CONVERSIONS were the fashion of the day—
All ranks, from highest even unto least;
Great ladies from the court, and meanest priest,
Contended for the sheep that went astray,
And sought to place them 'neath the Popedom's sway;
Casaubon's daughter they strove hard to bring
Under the shelter of the Church's wing,
For here they said the road to heaven lay.
Her father, fearing, tried her trust in God,
Told her that "he was penniless and poor;
Her only hope a marriage to secure,
Was the king's favour; that his grace to gain,
She must abjure her faith, and wear Rome's chain;"
And, while he spake, Philippa's eyes o'erflowed.

SONNET.

THE SAME.

HEN spake she out right boldly in his face,
Casaubon thrilling as he stood and heard
Each lofty sentiment, each noble word.
She said, "Such abjuration were disgrace,
Nothing would tempt her do a thing so base;
Christ she would follow, and take up His cross,
No matter at what sacrifice and loss.

Her father might be poor, God would provide,
Beyond the reach of want His servant place.
Could she not work, and by her labour live?"
Would not her toil all that she needed give?
And God made good her trust. In His great love
He took her early to Himself above;

And in the bloom of youth Philippa died.

SONNET.

HASTINGS.

HASTINGS, fair Hastings, I do love thee well;
Shame on this thankless heart were there not still
Within thy name a power to move and thrill.
It comes upon me like a happy spell,
To summon up, from Time's dark silent cell,
Thoughts that with brimming tears the eye can fill.
God knows how dear to me each street, each hill,
More dear than I in any words can tell.
I love the beach, washed by the emerald wave,
Green fields, and shady dells, and glades that lie
Under a bright, almost Italian sky.
Nor is there spot that doth not gently blend
With memories of dead or living friend;
But, most of all, I love one little grave.

SONNET.

HASTINGS.

BROTHER, say, does memory ever bring
Across thy mind remembrances, that rise
In mine, when often, in the balmy spring,
We wandered 'neath the fair and deep-sphered skies,
Still flushed with amber and with ruby dyes,
Though dusky twilight had begun to fling
O'er earth and heaven her overshadowing wing,
Veiling the woods in tender mysteries?
Oh, how we used to creep from bush to bush,
Or sometimes stretch us on the fragrant ground,
As the sweet nightingale poured all around
A flood of melody, now soft and low,
Now quick and joyous as a torrent's rush,
Anon in piercing pipe of passionate woe!

SONNET.

THE SAME.

NO sound besides e'er stirred the pulseless air,
Save when the tremulous music of the sea
Came swelling up the glades and meadows fair,
From the blue waves, across the upland lea,
Whose thymy fragrance lured the yellow bee
To revel oft in hours of sweetness there;
The happy thief! with none to cry, "Forbear!"
Gone those dear days, forgot they cannot be.
Our life was in its fair and golden prime,
And from all things bright augury we drew;
Our joys were many, and our sorrows few;
Bravely we looked into the coming time,
The hours beat hope in every throbbing chime,
And not a fear, of what might be, we knew.

SONNET.

LAKE OF GENEVA.

THE mountains soar in grandeur to the skies,
Sublime, majestic, beautiful, and fair;
And steeped in lustrous bath of violet air,
They take with wonder the delighted eyes,
As near this heavenly lake they towering rise.
And as they stand all drenched in glowing light,
They look as smooth as samite to the sight,
A gloss like sheen of satin on them lies,
The magic atmosphere has lent the stone
A tender beauty that is not its own;
Thus trial that is seen thro' tender haze
Of time, and thro' the light of far-past years,
Is robbed of all its sharpness as we gaze,
And sorrow's self a softer aspect wears.

SONNET.

THE AZURE GROTTO, CAPRI.

BENEATH the vine-clad slopes of Capri's Isle,
Which run down to the margin of that sea,
Whose waters kiss the sweet Parthenope,
There is a Grot whose rugged front the while,
Frowns only dark where all is seen to smile.
But enter, and behold! surpassing fair
The magic sight that meets your vision there—
Not heaven with all its broad expanse of blue,
Gleams coloured with a sheen so rich, so rare,
So changing in its clear translucent hue—
Glassed in the lustrous wave, the walls and roof
Shine as does silver scattered o'er the woof
Of some rich robe; or bright as stars whose light
Inlays the azure concave of the night.

SONNET.

THE SAME.

OU cannot find throughout this world, I ween,
Waters so fair as those within this cave,
Colour like that which flashes from the wave,
Or which is steeped in such cerulean sheen
As here gleams forth within this Grotto's screen.
And when the oar the boatman gently takes
And dips it in the flood, a fiery glow,
Ruddy as phosphor stirs in depths below;
Each ripple into burning splendour breaks,
As tho' some hidden fires beneath did lie
Waiting a touch to kindle into flame,
And shine in radiance on the dazzled eye,
As sparkling up from wells of light they came,
To make this Grot a glory far and nigh.

SONNET.

THE SIBYL'S CAVE, NAPLES.

THERE is a Cave deep in the olive wood,
O'ergrown with many a wild and shaggy tree,
Beneath whose thick and tangled canopy
Night, and her sister, awful Solitude,
In sombre silence ever grimly brood.
The glorious sun, the moon so chastely fair,
Shun each what seems a haunt for grim despair,
A home for evil things—a fearful path,
Down leading to the world of endless wrath.
And when the torches on the blackness glare,
All loathsome things appear, from which the heart
Shudders, recoiling with a sudden start.
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Is the dread horror of the Sibyl's cave.

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KU-995-130